

THE DERUGA CASE

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translated from the German by William Needham

Part one

"Who is the lawyer who came in with Judicial Councillor Fein?" a woman in the audience asked her husband. "And why has the accused got two lawyers? Mind you, Fein is probably only here for show."

"If the one you mean were a lawyer, dearest, he'd be wearing a robe," came the taunting reply. "But as to who he is exactly, I can't say."

A man sitting in front of them turned round and explained that the person in question was the defendant, Dr. Deruga.

"Is that possible?" The lady's voice was animated. "You know that for certain?"

The old gentleman was amused and gave a laugh. "As certain as I know I'm the musical instrument maker, Reichardt vom Katzentritt. In fact the doctor lives at my house."

The woman's eyes widened. "Is a murderer allowed to just wander about?" she asked. "I thought he'd be in prison. Aren't you scared, having a man like that under your roof?"

"Well, you see, madam," said the old man, "Councillor Fein brought him to me because he's known me a long time and wanted to be sure his client would be well looked after; and as the Councillor places so much trust in me as to allow me to repair his violins and flutes and to give his little daughter zither lessons, it's only right that I put my trust in him. He recommended his client to me most warmly and up to now the man has shown himself to be a nice, sweet-natured person, even if he is a little bit strange."

"You mustn't forget, dearest," her husband said, "being a defendant doesn't mean you've been convicted."

"Very true, very true," said the maker of musical instruments, who was all set to relate a number of curious miscarriages of justice when the appearance of the jury members caught his attention.

The young woman whispered to her husband that she thought it unseemly, all the same, for a murder suspect to be allowed to move about so openly, let alone someone who looked the very type to commit every sort of crime.

"Dearest, one has to beware of judging by appearances," said her husband. "That said, I too wouldn't trust that man an inch. It's remarkable how credulous and unpractised people are when it comes to interpreting faces."

Most of the audience had received the same unfavourable impression of Dr. Deruga. There was a carelessness about his clothes and his attitude, as well as his amused, inquiring looks which he directed throughout the whole hall and which appeared to mock the majesty and awesomeness of the place.

"I thought he'd have curly black hair and fiery eyes," observed the young wife, as if blaming her husband.

"But, little one," countered the latter, "it's not all of us who have blue eyes and blonde hair."

"He comes from northern Italy," interrupted one gentleman, "where the German element is noticeable."

Another person added that the doctor did indeed represent a definite Italian type, namely that of the devious, leering, vindictive Latin, an image that had dwelt in the imagination of the German mind since the early Middle Ages.

In the meantime a court usher had come up to the defendant and asked him to go and sit in the dock and to continue his conversation with the Councillor from there, which he obediently did.

"Lo, here comes 'the mighty hunter of the Lord'," said the Councillor, "our Dr. Bernburger." His eyes were on a young lawyer who was now entering the courtroom. "He's the one that Baroness Truschkowitz has set on your trail, and he has a good nose for sniffing around, as you can see. He's your most dangerous enemy; the State Prosecutor is merely a puppet."

Deruga took a long look at Dr. Bernburger who could be seen delving with great earnestness into his papers.

"I believe he's every bit as dangerous to you as he is to me," remarked Deruga with friendly mockery, his eyes trained on the Councillor's comfortable bulk. "Actually if he weren't such a rascal I could quite take to him."

With his arm draped on the handrail that marked off the dock the Councillor turned and said: "Don't make me laugh, you mad Italian! We could all take lessons from his vulturine manners."

"There's certainly something of a bird of prey about him," said Deruga. "A fine head; I'd like to look like that. Don't you think I look like that?"

"Then act like that," said the Councillor, "and concentrate your thoughts! Man! your position isn't as secure as you think. Doubtless Bernburger's got material he's keeping back to take us by surprise and ambush us with, so watch out!"

"Yes, of course," said Deruga somewhat impatiently. "You'll keep your head in any case; as for mine, you need be no more concerned about it than I am myself."

At that moment the doors at the rear of the hall flew open and in came the Presiding Judge, High Court Judge Dr. Zeunemann, followed by two assessors and the Public Prosecutor. As the Judge strode briskly forward the draught lifted his gown to reveal a firm handsome figure. He greeted the hall with a waft of his hand that was neither condescending nor over-familiar and it infused just the right blend of reverence and assurance. His personality invested the nervous, solemn gathering with a kind of relief, in that one had the feeling that nothing would

occur here that wasn't totally in order. He sat down and lightly rubbed his handsome, broad, white hands together before attending to the selection of jurors. This went smoothly and briskly, each member feeling himself propelled to his seat by a benevolent might.

"Gentlemen of the Jury," he began, "the case that concerns us today is somewhat complicated, and for that reason I wish to present you with a brief summary of its past history.

"On the second of October last the death occurred here in Munich of Frau Mingo Swieter, known prior to her divorce as Frau Deruga. The cause of death was accepted as being cancer, the illness she was suffering from. She had reverted to her maiden name when she divorced Deruga seventeen years before.

"In her will, read at the beginning of November, she named as the sole beneficiary of her fortune, amounting to some four hundred thousand marks, her divorced husband, Dr.Deruga. Of her relatives, including the nearest, her cousin, Baroness Truschowitz, wife of the landowner, no mention was made. At the instigation of Baroness Truschowitz and by virtue of the reasonable grounds for certain suspicions that have been made known to you, the Court arranged for the body to be exhumed, and it was established that the late Frau Swieter had not died as a result of her illness but as a result of the dreadful poison, curare.

"For the last seventeen years Dr.Deruga had resided in Prague. When he heard that there was a rumour going round concerning him with regard to certain suspicions, he travelled to Munich in order to determine who his slanderers, as he called them, were, and to bring an action against them. He was informed that the court had already ordered that a charge of murder be preferred against him and that his own proceedings would have to be held over until after the trial. Given the special conditions and in view of the fact that the accused had, in a way, surrendered himself, it was accepted that there was little likelihood of his absconding, and that, for the time being, the question of his arrest could be disregarded. What had raised suspicions from the start was that the accused was, at the time of the death, in considerable financial difficulties. Added to which is the fact that on the first of October last he purchased a rail-ticket for Munich and did not return to his Prague apartment until the afternoon of the third. The accused was not able to provide a satisfactory alibi.

"Those were the chief reasons why the Court was persuaded to raise the charge to that of manslaughter. It is assumed that Deruga visited his divorced wife to ask her for money-like as not, to extort money from her-and at some juncture, possibly her refusing him, his excitability got the better of him and he killed her.It speaks for itself, to be sure, that for Deruga to be following a plan he would have needed to have the poison with him. Independently the Court assumed that it was possible that the gambler, driven to despair, intended, should his final attempt fail, to end his own life, and that only in an unforeseen state of agitation did he make use of it."

While that last sentence was being uttered the Prosecutor tried in vain to attract the attention of the Presiding

Judge by twisting his thin body about and pointing a knarled forefinger this way and that.

"Excuse me," he said, trying to give his long white face a charming expression, "I would equally like to stress that I personally am not persuaded. Why would this man be in such a rush to commit suicide? He was having much too good a time alive to chuck it all in on the spur of the moment. Furthermore I would like to point out that when first questioned by the Investigating Judge the accused took responsibility for this most heinous of deeds-or, to be more accurate-boasted about it, only to deny it afterwards with even greater audacity."

"Yes, yes, we'll be coming back to that," said the Presiding Judge, motioning with his hand rather like a conductor signing to an over-bold woodwind player to calm down. "First I want to question the accused."

"You've got to stand up," the Councillor whispered to his client, who was drowsily observing the hall and the people.

"Stand up? Me?" retorted Dr.Deruga astonished to the point of outrage. "And on top of everything else. Right, we'll stand." He slowly rose and fixed his sharp, penetrating eyes on the Presiding Judge; one might have thought Dr.Deruga an examiner and Dr.Zeunemann an exam candidate.

"You are Sigismondo Enea Deruga," said the Presiding Judge opening the examination of the accused; it took only a slight emotional stress on the two fine-sounding first names to prompt laughter in the audience.

Deruga cast a piercing look about him. "Is it something of a crime here not to be called Johann Schulze or Karl Muller?" he asked.

"Please simply answer my question," said Dr.Zeunemann coolly. "You are Sigismondo Enea Deruga, you were born in Bologna and you are forty-six years old. Is that right?"

"Yes."

"You studied medicine in Bologna, Padua, and Vienna then set up practice first in Linz and then in Vienna, after you'd acquired right of domicile there. Is that right?"

"It would have been a real disgrace," said Deruga, "not to have managed that."

"I again remind the accused," said the Presiding Judge, a little annoyed by the laughter that had ensued, "that you are to keep to short, clear replies to the questions directed at you. It is your fault that the preliminary hearing dragged out. I am seizing this opportunity to censure you severely. You are obviously adhering to the principle of stalling and misleading the court with your strange ways and impertinences. In doing so you are making your position worse and are no nearer your goal. The investigation is keeping to its sure path in spite of all the stones you throw in its way. You stand accused of a serious crime and you would do better to genuinely support the court and the gentlemen of the jury in their thorny task and win them over, instead of reinforcing the visible testimony of your moments of unruly and unrestrained behaviour. You are in a country where justice discharges the responsibilities of its high office without fear or favour. The highest in the land and the lowest will receive here no more and no less than justice. Correspondingly we

expect from the highest as from the lowest the awe that is due to such a worthy and sacred institution. The educated person should offer it to us voluntarily; but, if need be, we know how to enforce it."

"Yes, yes, carry on," said Deruga indulgently, "I'll get round to answering your questions."

Dr.Zeunemann thought it better to leave it at that, and continued: "You got married in 18.. to Mingo Swieter from Lubeck; the marriage produced a child, a daughter, who died when she was four years old; shortly afterwards, seventeen years ago, the marriage was dissolved. The reason cited was wilful desertion on the part of the wife, and indeed Frau Sweiter gave as her pretext the Viennese climate which she could not tolerate. In reality one can take it that your cantankerous character and your unpredictable temperament, verging on the violent, were what caused her to take this step."

Those words and the questioning look he received from Dr.Zeunemann prompted Dr.Deruga to declare: "It will be best if you keep solely to the testimonies that were given."

Suppressing an impulse to laugh the Presiding Judge calmly continued: "Soon after the divorce you moved from Vienna to Prague and set up practice there, while Frau Swieter settled in Munich where she had spent part of her youth. We'll refer now and again to other dates. Tell us now what you did on the first of October last year."

"As I don't keep a diary," said Dr.Deruga in a raised voice, "nor have my daily activities filmed or played on a gramophone, it's impossible, alas, for me to give you an account with any mathematical precision of how my day went. I will certainly have breakfasted, visited a few of my patients, had my midday meal, and afterwards sat in a cafe for half an hour. Then in my surgery hours I will have examined various examples of the species I find very unlikeable, namely mankind. But I do recall sometime towards evening going out to visit a respectable lady with whom I'm on friendly terms. Near the station I met a colleague who asked if I, like him, were on my way to the medical association. Unfortunately no, I told him, as I had to go away. Whereupon he accompanied me to the station. On the spur of the moment I purchased a ticket to Munich, because otherwise I would have had to admit that I was lying, and also because it occurred to me that that way the lady who had become my friend would be sure not to be compromised."

"Do you still refuse," asked Dr.Zeunemann, "to give the name of this very decent lady?"

"I've already said, it's because I don't want her compromised," Deruga answered.

"I must impress upon you, Dr.Deruga," warned Dr.Zeunemann, "your chivalry stands on very shaky ground. Can a lady be expected to allow a friend to place himself in such danger for her sake? One might more readily assume that this lady doesn't exist at all. Everything you have told us lacks probability. Given your lifestyle, the fact that you visited a lady and spent days and nights with her is not unbelievable. It may well be that it is your desire not to compromise her, but the means you have chosen for this

purpose can only be described as inappropriate and ridiculous. Anyone like you who finds himself in a tight spot financially, does not spend thirty-two marks on a train ticket he has no use for."

"Thirty-one marks seventy-five," corrected Deruga.

"The ticket from Prague to Munich costs thirty-two marks," said Dr. Zeunemann sharply.

"The return ticket is twenty-five pfennigs cheaper," insisted Deruga.

"Let's leave it at that. One doesn't throw away thirty-one marks seventy-five pfennigs when one is seriously short of cash."

"A prudent German possibly not," replied Deruga, "but I've done stupider things in my life than that. Incidentally, I wasn't short of cash, I just had debts."

The Prosecutor wrung his hands and turned his gaze upwards, as if calling on heaven to witness such crudeness. He then requested leave to speak and asked how the accused came to have enough money on him for such an unforeseen journey.

Deruga responded by reaching into waistcoat pocket, pulling out a handful of banknotes and coins, and counting aloud: "Sixty, sixty-three, seventy, seventy-four. You see, I could leave for Prague right this minute if I didn't prefer to remain in this pleasant town of yours."

"If you had money, why didn't you pay your debts?" shouted the Prosecutor, whose voice, whenever he was agitated, turned almost into a screech.

"O, there was never enough to do that, not by a long chalk," laughed Deruga. "I had only enough for my daily needs."

With a motion of the hand the Presiding Judge put an end to this run of questions.

"So, does the accused maintain," he asked, looking at Deruga, "that he bought a ticket to Munich just for show? What made you choose Munich exactly?"

"That's a hard question," answered Deruga. "Had I got myself a ticket to Frankfurt or Vienna you could be asking the same sort of question. Perhaps there's a psychoanalyst present who could give us interesting information regarding the association of ideas, and whether or not it's prompted by one's emotions. My specialism is diseases of the nose, throat, and pharynx."

"What did you do after you'd purchased the ticket?" continued the Presiding Judge.

"I stood at the barrier," Deruga explained. "When it was opened I went to the train. I didn't board it. With a platform ticket I'd bought earlier, I retraced my steps. I then went to call on the already much-mentioned lady with whom I stayed until the afternoon of the third of October."

"The improbabilities are mounting," said Dr. Zeunemann. "Without a compelling reason, what doctor absents himself from his practice for a day and a half?"

"I take the view," said Deruga, "that I'm not there for the practice but rather the practice is there for me."

"A worrying guideline for a doctor," commented Dr. Zeunemann.

"How so?" Deruga responded off-handedly. "Most patients are very good if they have to wait a couple of days, the rest have actually no need to come at all. I had no important cases at the time."

"Your patients certainly were not spoiled," said Dr. Zeunemann. "Over the last year or two, on account of your being careless and inattentive in the running of your practice, you've actually lost a number of them. Anyway—length of time apart—it was strikingly obvious even to you that in those two days you informed no one of your departure. According to your own testimony, which your housekeeper confirmed, you arrived back at your apartment on the third of October shortly before four o'clock in the afternoon. In passing let it be noted that the express train from here gets into Prague at three twenty. Your surgery hours were not yet over and you had two patients, waiting in the hopes of seeing you, whom your housekeeper had consoled with the prospect of your speedy return. However, you refused to see these good-natured folk, who well deserved some consideration on your part, all because, as you told your housekeeper, you were tired and wanted to lie down on your bed. So then, your stay with the lady of such tender virtue must have been a very exhausting one."

"I always find women exhausting," said Deruga, "especially if they're stupid."

"So let us assume," said the Presiding Judge—the Prosecutor was all the while wringing his hands and casting eyes towards the heaven that threatened to disappear beneath his devilishly unruly brows—"that this lady who befriended you is as stupid as she is virtuous! Let us now proceed to another important point. Would you tell us when and how you were informed of the contents of the will wherein the late Frau Swieter made you sole heir to her estate!"

"The beginning of November," said Deruga, "It looked all official which is why I didn't memorise the date."

"You're supposed," said Dr. Zeunemann, "to have exhibited your astonishment and joy in a lively fashion. I note"—he repeated the word to the jury with emphasis—that other individuals testify to that astonishment and joy."

"O noble Judge, stout fellow," said Deruga with a smile.

"Please refrain from incidental remarks," said the Presiding Judge. "It's already eleven-thirty and I would like to reach a provisional end to your preliminary examination before the midday break. Tell us, please, when and how you first came to hear something of the suspicions that had been raised against you!"

"From a very fine sort of man," began Deruga, "very decent and honorable, albeit only a rough Italian winedealer. He's called Tommaso Verzielli and he first came to see me fifteen years ago, poor devil, after serving a five-year prison sentence. What had happened was that he had stabbed a policeman who was about to arrest a poor old woman who had helped herself to a loaf of bread in a baker's shop. Tommaso was despondent and wanted to go back to Italy because he reasoned that if he stayed among Germans he'd never be out of jail; he couldn't help seeing things that sent the blood rushing to his head. I said it would be no different in Italy and put it to him that he should leave people to tear one another to bits, they deserved it, each

was as bad as the other. It was no great pity. He should get married and work and care for only his wife and children; moreover I advised him to start a business in Italian wine and food, and I advanced him a small amount of capital. He's long since paid it back. He applied himself and used his intelligence, and his business quickly took off, yet he continues to show his gratitude as if I were giving him new life every day.

"Well, late one evening in the middle of November this same Verzielli came running to me, all worked up, and told me that the Italian Consul, Cavaliere Faramengo, a grand old gentleman, if a wee bit feeble-minded, had been to see him-Verzielli by now having set himself up in a fine restaurant-and on the quiet had enquired about me, and in deepest secrecy had disclosed the fact that I was to be arrested for the murder of my divorced wife. The good fellow was beside himself and offered me everything he had if I wanted to flee to America. 'Me?... Deruga?...flee? You don't know me very well, my good friend,' I said and, despite Verzielli's entreaties I immediately raced off to the Italian Consul's. Poor old fellow, the fierceness of my manner when I confronted him, nearly gave him a stroke. Then, since I couldn't get sufficient information I travelled all the way here to get to know the source of the infamous rumours."

"You must have been told," observed Dr.Zeunemann, "that the Court had already decided to raise the charge against you to that of murder, and that you would have to postpone any action for defamation of character until the trial ended. If your initial behaviour was able, as I am not loath to point out, to convey the appearance of innocence your conduct before the investigating judge, by contrast, weighs dangerously against you. To begin with, you refused to answer the question of where you were from the first to the third of October. Then you described how, with the intention of ending your life, you took a train, got off at some place or other, you don't know where, walked aimlessly through the countryside until you came to a spot that was quite secluded. For a long time you lay beside a river, struggling with yourself until you fell asleep exhausted. You woke up, your mind clearer, you tarried there a while longer and then went home. Last to emerge was the tale of the mysterious lady. The spring of your fancy bubbles over."

"Not as much as you reckon," said Deruga. "I just wanted to irritate the Investigating Judge and I can probably say I succeeded. He nearly went into nervous spasms."

Dr.Zeunemann paused and waited for the laughter in the hall to subside, then said: "I'm surprised that a man in your position, of your age and intellect cares to behave so childishly or so foolishly, unless, perhaps, all your various accounts are simply a method calculated to raise uncertainties and to mislead."

"Have you ever been questioned by a gormless investigating judge?" asked Deruga. "No, probably not. Then you cannot know how you would behave in such a situation-though presumably with more sense than me. You have an enviable constitution. You are so undeniably a prime example of how a healthy person should be. Anything shocking arising from nasty impressions, questions, doubts, and passions is regulated by your perfect digestion, with the result that

you are always in stable equilibrium; I, in comparison, am terribly irritable."

Dr. Zeunemann had tried to interrupt the accused but without sufficient energy. "You probably have more cause to be uneasy than I do," he said, with light irony. "Perhaps you would feel better if for once you tried speaking with complete openness instead of irritating yourself and us with your evasions."

"You, Your Honour, I have no wish to irritate, you can depend on it," said Deruga, his tone friendly and appeasing, as if perhaps he were addressing a child.

"Wait for me in the first floor ante-chamber," Councillor Fein whispered to his client straight after the court rose. From there they went through a rear portal into the grounds that led to a quiet traffic-free street. The Councillor stood at the foot of a slope, covered with bushes and shrubs, poking the tip of his umbrella into the carpet of old, wet, sticky leaves. "There'll soon be snowdrops and crocuses: I want to make it a little easier for them."

"Come...come," said Deruga, tugging at the Councillor's arm. "They'll find their way without you. Tell me, am I permitted to read during the afternoon session, or, better, sleep? I can't describe how all that stuff bores me. You could give me a nudge whenever I have to do something."

"Don't do anything stupid," said the Councillor. "This afternoon they're likely to call Privy Councillor von Maulchen whose testimony will greatly harm you. You'll need to be on the look out for anything you can turn to your advantage."

"Turn to my advantage," exclaimed Deruga, "I could kill him! I hate that man, or rather that waxen image of a man looking down on a cesspit"

"Listen to me, Deruga," said Fein. "It's not often I understand you, but what I understand least is how you were happy to go on owing money to a man you detested. You could have obtained money elsewhere, say from your good friend Verzielli."

"It would probably have offended your sense of honour to owe money to a man you hated," said Deruga. "You see, that's where we differ. I derived pleasure from seeing how anxious he was about his cash, and how he agonised lest his anxiety be noticed and how he put on a front of being totally indifferent. Because firstly he wants to be regarded as being immensely rich, and secondly as being very charitable where money's concerned. Were I rolling in money I probably wouldn't have paid him off, if only to watch him fidget."

"I believe you know how to hate with a vengeance," said the Councillor thoughtfully, giving the doctor a sideways look that was not without admiration.

Deruga let out a long hearty laugh like a child. "That I certainly can," he said. "Many a time I could have twisted a knife in his heart simply because I didn't like the corners of his mouth. But this afternoon, for you, I'll do my best to keep myself in check."

"Yes, if you would do that for me," said the Councillor. "I do feel somewhat responsible for you."

Privy Councillor von Maulchen appeared in the hall, his elegant clothes drenched with a pleasant, fashionable perfume, walking with the ease and assurance of one accorded general popularity. The words of the oath he repeated to the presiding judge were delivered with a kindly helpfulness and concluded in a slightly questioning tone, as if he wanted know if his every sentence was acceptable to the Presiding Judge and to the dear Lord.

When all formalities had been gone through Dr. Zeunemann began the examination: "Since May 19.., that is to say five years ago now, the accused has owed you six thousand marks. Will you please tell us how you came to know the accused and how it was he borrowed money from you?"

"Both are soon done," said the Privy Councillor, "I got to know Deruga in the Doctors' Association and occasionally he treated a small growth in my nose. Colleagues recommended him to me because he has an especially light touch, which I can vouch for. Granted, mine was a very simple matter but even so his skills were self-evident. He had certain little quirks and idiosyncrasies. For example, I remember he always kept me in a state of expectation, waiting for something extremely painful coming along, though absolutely nothing ever did. I've heard it said that he treated his patients gently or very roughly, whatever took his fancy, or should I say depending on what mood he was in. However that's really not for me to say in this place, and as far as my personal experience goes, I can only praise him as a doctor. When, on one occasion, I happened to pass a remark about the shabby furniture in his waiting room, he told me he did not have the money to furnish it as he would like, whereupon, following an impulse, I offered him the amount he needed. Perhaps I'm not very good with figures," said the Privy Councillor, smilingly interrupting himself, "but in this case, in respect of a colleague and talented doctor, I believed there was nothing at risk."

"Did the accused use the money for new furnishings?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"Not having looked, I can't say," answered the Privy Councillor. "It was reported to me later-gossip gets around-that his waiting-room chairs were getting shabbier and shabbier; understandably I avoided calling on him and seeing for myself."

The Presiding Judge turned to face Deruga: "Do you wish to say anything about that? Did you refurnish your waiting room with the money lent to you?"

"Is that relevant?" asked Deruga. "I always believed one could use one's money as one pleased, be it lent or stolen."

"So you're refusing to answer?"

"As far as I remember," said Deruga sullenly, "I purchased instruments, some modern apparatus, an operating chair, and things of that sort."

"You have never, then," asked the Presiding Judge, continuing his questioning of the witness, "over the following years reminded the accused of his debt?"

"Heaven forbid!" retorted the Privy Councillor. "A

colleague! On no account would I ever do that without sufficient reasons. I'd actually given the money up for lost because the talk was that Deruga was running his practice in an entirely slipshod fashion and was leading a very disordered life. Incidentally, I wish to make it clear immediately that I did not enquire into the truth of what was being said and I ask that no conclusion be drawn from what I have reported."

"That being so," said Dr. Zeunemann, "let us pass on to what it was that persuaded you to demand the return of the money. Are you willing to provide us with a full description of how it all came about?"

"In the September of last year," reported the Privy Councillor, "I met Deruga at the Medical Association, which has already been mentioned. It was over a year since I'd last seen him and to all intents and purposes I'd forgotten the money. In a rather casual manner he called me over to his table. He wanted to send me a woman patient whom he believed had a complaint in the lower part of her body; I was to examine her and if need be treat her, but for free, as she couldn't pay. I was more put out by his manner and tone than by the nature of the case and I replied, I like to think, a trifle coolly, that I was inundated with work and that the woman with the complaint might consider going to the public service doctor. At that Deruga's face turned chalk white and he hurled a torrent of abuse at me, accusing me, for example, of pure moneymaking, of being the doctor for the wives of top businessmen and the mistresses of royalty, and of much more of that kind which I have no wish to repeat. I should like to add that it's my belief that, unjustified as his charges were, and as inappropriate as was his manner, he was acting in good faith. In his eyes I am cold-hearted and strive only for resounding success and outward show. Perhaps it derives from a particularly folksy or gypsylike disposition that is altogether bereft of any sense of regulated middle-class life with its traditional concepts of honour and decency. At that moment I was unable to aspire to that objective view but, I confess, I felt wounded and outraged to my very core."

"The pink wax figure might well nigh have melted," whispered Deruga to the Councillor.

"Without curbing my indignation, or even wanting to, I answered vehemently that he had least cause of anyone to make accusations of that sort to me, since it was I who had willingly helped him out and had stood the loss ungrudgingly. Originally I would have taken him to be reliable," he said spitefully, "otherwise I would have lent him nothing. However, I told him I might have considered a colleague to be someone who honoured his debts, and here he was actually taking me to task; he should pay up. Then several colleagues intervened and stopped us quarrelling. Before we parted I told Deruga that he shouldn't take what I may have said in the heat of the moment to mean I wanted to put pressure on him. Allow me to emphasise that I would never, of my own freewill, have mentioned a word of this matter in public."

"May I ask," said Councillor Fein, turning to the witness, "afterwards, did you never again refer to the matter of the money?"

"No, absolutely not," the Privy Councillor answered, "on the contrary, I was sorry I'd let the reminder slip out

when both our tempers were running high."

"So, then," said Councillor Fein, "the situation has not changed in the slightest for Dr.Deruga, and there is no reason to submit that he simply had to get some money in order to settle the debt."

"Not so!" shouted the Public Prosecutor. "Going by what occurred in the Medical Association, the episode of the debt was known to a whole lot of colleagues; that makes for a considerable change in the situation. We can take it for granted that any educated man would have sufficient honourable feeling not to be indifferent in the matter."

"Please," requested Councillor Fein,"let us please accept Dr.Deruga the way he is, and not the way he is viewed by others. It doesn't matter to him to go on owing money to Privy Councillor von Maulchen, for whom, by all accounts, he had no special liking; it probably meant very little to him that a few other colleagues, with whom he apparently got on very well, knew about it. In any case, if he were so thick-skinned on the point earlier, he wouldn't suddenly become so sensitive that he commits a crime to get out of a tight spot."

Standing there, it was rather the magnificence of Councillor Fein's manner, the power of his massive frame, and the repose of his heavy features that made him more effective and convincing than his words, and which disconcerted his fidgety opponent.

"You were the colleague," the Presiding Judge continued, "who encountered the accused on the first of October between six and seven o'clock near the station, and you asked if he was on his way to the Doctors' Association?"

"Yes," said the Privy Councillor, "I asked the question because, after what had recently happened, I wanted to act in a collegial manner towards him. His reply, that he needed to catch a train, aroused no doubt in me, as we were near to the station and he was carrying a package. I noticed the package because it was larger than any that a gentleman of our social circle is in the habit of carrying."

The Presiding Judge turned to Deruga and asked if he admitted carrying a package and, if so, what was in it.

"Poor devil that I am," said Deruga, "and one who never had the audacity to wish to belong to Herr von Maulchen's social circle, I did indeed allow myself to carry a package."

"It would contain a change of underwear and the sort of things one needs at night."

The Prosecutor leapt to his feet and asked that it be ascertained whether or not Deruga had a package with him when he returned to his apartment on the third of October.

"The housekeeper will be questioned very shortly," said the Presiding Judge. "The accused answered you, Privy Councillor, saying that he intended catching a train, and you accompanied him to the station. Is there any further useful information you can give us?"

"No, none at all," declared the Privy Councillor. "You will forgive me if I don't repeat rumours and gossip because things like that circulate more or less about every one and

shouldn't be given consideration in serious cases. like this."

"Perhaps you might say, though," suggested the Presiding Judge, "what sort of reputation Dr. Deruga enjoyed in general among his colleagues?"

"I don't think there's anything I can tell you as regards that aspect that would be of any help to you," said the Privy Councillor apologetically. "There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn from what I've already told the court. I wouldn't want to depart from the firm basis of the facts."

The next witness, Verzielli, was a stocky, swarthy man who took the oath standing to attention, his eyes fixed on the Presiding Judge, his left hand over his heart, his voice loud and clear, and with a passionate expression on his face.

"You are acquainted with the accused, but not related?" asked Dr. Zeunemann.

"Friendly with him, very friendly," said Verzielli eagerly.

"But not related?" repeated Dr. Zeunemann.

"Unfortunately no," said Verzielli, "but very friendly. I love and admire him."

"You felt grateful to him," said the Presiding Judge amiably, "since it was through his good advice as well as through his advancing you a sum of money, that he paved the way for your success?"

"Oh, advice and capital, they're not what count most," exclaimed Verzielli, "He restored my faith in mankind. He is noble and helpful."

"You were soon able to pay back the loan," continued the Presiding Judge, "and since then you in turn have occasionally lent money to him?"

"It's not worth mentioning," said Verzielli, shaking both hand and head, "when I owe him my whole existence. By the way, he never asked me for money. I forced it on him. He just had no idea how to manage money, he was too good and too noble to bother with it."

"Did he ever pay you back?"

"O yes," Verzielli called out proudly, "and as regards anything still owing, he'd ask me now and then if I needed it. But what would I have needed it for? It was as safe with him as in the bank. I was always telling him there was no hurry, even if he returned it to my children. My wife thought the same, we shouldn't press him."

"Were there ever times when he put you off by referring to possible gifts or a possible legacy on the part of his divorced wife?"

"He didn't need to put me off," said Verzielli, a little irritated, "but of course there were times when he spoke of his divorced wife and of his dead child. He loved the poor child very much. My wife and I would often weep when he spoke of her."

With those words he pulled out a large coloured handkerchief and ran it across his forehead and eyes to dry whatever tears or sweat were there.

"What I want you to do," said Dr.Zeunemann kindly, "is to pay very close attention to my questions and to reply to them briefly and clearly. Has the accused at any time spoken of the likelihood of receiving money from his divorced wife, whether in her lifetime or after her death?"

"I think," said Verzielli, squeezing his handkerchief, "he once happened to say casually that his wife was rich and that he was absolutely sure, if he asked her, she would let him have what he needed."

"Do you remember when he told you that?"

"I don't think it was all that recent," said Verzielli.

"We are now coming," said the Presiding Judge, lightly clearing his throat and raising his voice, "to a very important point, and I require you to concentrate all your attention and memory. Above all, don't give any thought to what consequences your words could have for the accused, but think only of the oath you took and tell the truth!"

Verzielli drew himself up straight as a ramrod, looked squarely into the eyes of the Presiding Judge and clutched his hankerchief.

"Describe to us exactly and in every detail how you came to learn of the rumour that Dr.Deruga had murdered his wife, and how you informed him of it."

Verzieli said nothing but stared intently into a corner of the room evidently trying hard to collect his thoughts.

"Perhaps I can assist you," said Dr.Zeunemann patiently. "On the evening of the twenty-fifth of November, the Italian Consul, Cavaliere Faramengo, came into your restaurant, as he did from time to time, to have a glass of wine. He asked you questions regarding the accused and you learned that the Consul had received enquiries from Munich concerning Deruga. He was suspected of having murdered his divorced wife, who had died at the beginning of October, naming him heir to her estate. Beside yourself with indignation, you straightway raced to the accused, told him all you'd learnt and said that if only you knew who the slanderer was you'd kill them. The accused had laughed and had said: 'You fathead, of course I did it!' That is what the Investigating Judge, not without some difficulty, got from you. Do you now confirm it before the assembled court and before the members of the jury?"

"It's true that Dr.Deruga said 'You fathead, of course I do', but he was right only insofar as calling me a 'fathead', because he meant ..."

"Keep to the point," said Dr.Zeunemann. "What did you reply to that?"

"I said it wasn't possible, and I was totally convinced it wasn't possible; but being in the nervous state I was in, I begged him to flee and then to go to America, and I offered him everything I had to help get him started again."

"Good man," said Deruga suddenly in a loud voice.

Verzielli, who until now had avoided looking across at the dock, turned his head round and sent Deruga a look of despair.

Dr.Zeunemann also looked at Deruga. "How do you explain," he said, "that in the first moment of surprise you

confessed your crime to Verzielli?"

"I wanted to see what kind of face he'd make," said Deruga lightly, "that's all."

"Yes, of course," said Verzielli. "That's how he was. It's him all over. O God, how right he was to call me a fathead. Yes, an ass, what a damned fool I was not to have seen through it rightaway."

"Keep to the point," interrupted Dr. Zeunemann. "The mood of the accused suddenly and unexpectedly changed; he flew into a rage and wanted to be off to the Italian Consul without delay to find out who had slandered him. 'Then you didn't do it' you shouted and implored the accused not to do anything hasty and, instead, to leave his visit to the Consul until the next morning. Seeing how furious he was, were you perhaps afraid he might do the Consul a mischief?"

"God forbid!" exclaimed an indignant Verzielli. It's just that I didn't want the Consul to know that it was me who'd put Deruga wise. Also I was afraid that Dr. Deruga, who had every right to be angry, would be much too outspoken and set the Consul against him. To cut it short, I was a fathead and was far too flustered. I didn't know what I was saying and what I was doing."

During the course of the testimony, the Prosecutor had got to his feet and had accompanied the Italian's replies with impromptu gestures and here and there with a scornful laugh or a scandalised cry.

"In your excitement," he said, now bending forward, "you had the impression, at any rate, that the accused was in earnest when he said: 'Of course I did it'. Otherwise afterwards you wouldn't have shouted: 'Then you didn't do it!'"

Verzielli shot an angry, contemptuous look at the speaker and said resolutely: "Whatever I said and thought, I was wrong and the doctor was right, and if he'd murdered his wife, which he hadn't, he would still have been right."

A stir accompanied by laughter went through the room.

"A peculiar opinion," said the Prosecutor, standing with his hand on his hips.

"I think," resumed the Presiding Judge when all was quiet again, "we'll leave the opinions aside and keep to the facts. Do any of the gentlemen colleagues or gentlemen jurors have any further question to put to the witness? No? Then let us move on to Fraulein Klinkart, the accused's housekeeper or receptionist."

A woman aged about thirty-five came forward. She was dressed simply but well. She had dark hair, a straight nose and calm brown eyes. She took quick, sure steps, and then stood looking around as if she were searching for something that needed doing. When her eyes fell on Deruga she gave him a friendly nod of encouragement.

She took the oath gladly and cheerfully; she seemed to think that now she was holding the reins she would make short work of all the mix-up.

The examination began thus:

"How long have you been employed by the accused?"

"Ten years."—in other words: 'So, my good sirs, I know him rather better than do all of you.'

"What does your work involve?"

"The running of the house; I do the cooking, clean the rooms, receive the patients, write the bills, and so on."

"That's quite a lot. Were you at one time, or are you now, in a friendly —I wanted to say 'more than a friendly relationship with the accused?"

She wrinkled her eyebrows and appeared about to give a rash reply, but thought better and answered simply: "No."

"How much are you paid?"

"Eighty kronen."

"Do you have any other income?"

"No."

"Obviously your job has its own rewards. Presumably you're very independent? Did the doctor treat you well?"

"He me, and I him. We work well together. Mind you, Dr.Deruga is easy to get along with; anybody who can't have themselves to blame."

"Good. Do you remember the first of October last year? The accused left his apartment some time around six o'clock. Did he tell you where he was going, and when he would be coming back?"

"Dr.Deruga said he would probably not be returning home that night and didn't know if he would be back in time for his surgery the day after. Should any patients turn up, I was to put them off."

"Did you think he was going away?"

"I didn't think anything at all, because it was none of my business. It wasn't my custom to ask him where he was going, though I would tease him now and then because I knew women ran after him. I might well have teased him that evening."

"What did the accused have with him when he left?"

"A package."

"Do you know what was in the package?"

"No."

"You didn't know but you very likely had some idea. Did you see him wrap anything up? Did he rummage about in wardrobes and drawers?"

"I saw he was searching for something and I asked him what it was. He was angry and said: 'Damn and blast! where have you hidden all the old Fasching junk?' I told him that what was left of it was all in the chest in the courtyard. The thing was he'd lent various items or else given them away."

"What did you take 'old Fasching junk' to mean?"

"Costumes he'd worn previously for Fasching. In recent years he hadn't joined in the festivities."

"What sort of costumes were they?"

"O, I can't say exactly what they signified. Farmers' clothes, and a clown's, and a monk's, I think. I don't know

a lot about it."

"Presumably you offered to help him?"

"Yes, but he said: 'Go to blazes!' He wasn't being nasty, it was just his way of talking. It was quite all right with me, he'd had his meal and I had things to do in the kitchen."

Meantime the Prosecutor had stood up and was gesticulating with his long arms and grimacing.

"My dear young lady," he said, "didn't the accused have a travelling bag?"

"Yes, when he travelled he took a travelling bag," said Fraulein Klinkhart.

"Now, my dear young lady," continued the Prosecutor with cloying gentleness, "as the lady in the house and as housekeeper, would you not have taken a peep, partly out of curiosity and partly out of a love of tidiness, when your employer had left, to see what he'd taken with him? Putting myself in your position, I imagine you'd try to get some idea of how long your employer would be away. From what he'd taken with him, a great many things could be deduced."

Sombrely Fraulein Klinkhart wrinkled her brow and shot the Prosecutor a look of unconcealed distaste.

"I saw," she answered, "that it had all been left in a muddle, and I put everything straight. Whether anything was missing I can't say. I didn't pay any attention to the items. It did appear to me, though, that he hadn't taken a nightshirt with him."

"You see! You see!" the Prosecutor called out triumphantly, pointing his long forefinger at her, "that's what I've been wanting from you. So then, he didn't take a nightshirt with him?"

"So then what?" said Fraulein Klinkhart darkly, "if he wasn't going away!"

"Just so, dear lady," said the Prosecutor, smiling delightedly, "Now if there was no nightshirt in the package, what, in your opinion, was in it?"

Fraulein Klinkhart, now cross and impatient, gave a shrug, and said: "Probably some costume or other for dressing up in that he was going to lend to someone."

The Presiding Judge turned to face Deruga. "Would you solve the riddle for us?"

"There was a kimono inside," said Deruga, "that a patient had once brought me from China, and that I wanted to lend to the lady I was to visit."

"You said just now that there'd been underwear inside," said Dr. Zeunemann propping himself against the arm of his chair to get a better view of Deruga.

"Yes, can you not imagine how fed up I am with all the silly details that have been gone over again and again?" Deruga's response was accompanied by an expression on his face so furious that the questioner involuntarily jerked back. "I said just what came into my head, and next time I shan't utter a single word. Inside was a kimono, a nightshirt, a toothbrush, a revolver, and a bottle of poison. I'm absolutely sick of that damned package."

Dr. Zeunemann waited a while and then said quietly: "I don't question you because it gives me pleasure, but because it's my duty. I hope you understand that and decide what you want to declare once and for all were the contents of the package."

Deruga's face relaxed. "Actually," he said with a kindly smile, "I'm an ill-mannered fellow. Do excuse me. In fact there was a kimono in the confounded package."

"The one you wanted to lend to the lady in question," Dr. Zeunemann added.

"So far as I know," remarked the Prosecutor, "Fasching doesn't start until January."

Deruga laughed. "The lady is either making preparations very early or she needs it for another reason. I'll ask her when next I see her, and then I'll let you know."

The Prosecutor trembled with anger, all the more so when he saw an amused smile on the faces of the Judicial Councillor and the Presiding Judge, which the latter quickly suppressed.

"Let us now proceed," he said, "to the return of the accused on the third of October. What happened there? Can you call to mind, Fraulein Klinkhart, what Dr. Deruga said?"

"O yes," she answered, "I said: 'It's a good thing you're back, Doctor. Some patients have been waiting over two hours to see you.' The doctor said: 'All the worse for them. I'm very tired and I'm going to bed.' I asked him if he wasn't at least going to spare them a few minutes of his time and make fresh appointments for them. He dismissed this with a wave of his hand and said: 'I can't', and then I knew I shouldn't press him further."

"Weren't you taken aback by this behaviour?"

"He's a migraine sufferer and when he has an attack his headaches are so bad everything's a whirr to him. He goes and lies down and I mustn't disturb him. By the next day it's gone. He looked so terribly pale, as he always does when he gets migraine."

"So he went to his bedroom and you didn't see him until the following morning. Did he have the package with him that he had when he left?"

"I wasn't paying any attention to that."

"I remind you, Fraulein Klinkhart," said Dr. Zeunemann sternly, "that you are testifying under oath. It's credible that initially you weren't thinking about the package, but on the next day when you were tidying the room, weren't you reminded of it?"

"It comes into your mind," said Fraulein Klinkhart, her calm brown eyes now lit with a livelier fire, "because you have a suspicion and you possibly imagine there's been some kind of murder instrument in the package. I had no such concern, hence I thought it of no importance at all, which it certainly wasn't. But if there'd been a costume in it that he lent to someone, then there's no way he could have brought it back."

"Yes," said Dr. Zeunemann, "if that is so. Did the accused then own a Chinese kimono?"

"I did see some Chinese things once," said Fraulein

Klinkhart. "Having said that, I'm not acquainted with everything the doctor owns. I'm not a spy."

Dr. Zeunemann riffled through his files for a while and then asked: "Did the accused inform you straightaway when he received news of the inheritance that had come his way?"

"Yes, he called me in," Fraulein Klinkhart recalled. "I was just in the kitchen and he was very excited and making all kinds of plans for the future, and he asked me what I would like, but it had to be something beautiful and expensive. I said I had only one wish and that was for a pair of diamond earrings. He promised me them but he teased me about it, which was like him. We had a good laugh."

"So he was very pleased?"

"Certainly," said Fraulein Klinkhart evenly, "he was absolutely mad with joy. He's always had to put up with having not much money and he loved to picture himself a rich man. He was like a child when he let his imagination take over. But before an hour had gone by he'd often say that he despised the whole rotten business."

There was still a tailor and a barber to call. Deruga owed larger amounts of money to them. Unlike the elegance of the Privy Councillor, the elegance of the tailor did not set out to flatter the wearer but to utterly crush and annihilate not so much the poor devils for whom elegance of that order was totally out of the question, but those others, who, in fact, had money, but not enough, or whose taste and education were insufficient for them to entrust themselves to a comparable artist in cloth.

He revealed he had become suspicious very early, because he was unable to regard Dr. Deruga as a truly refined gentleman. He, the tailor took only quality customers which is why on this point he was not easily deceived. Deruga was too cordial with the employees and there had been times when Deruga had shared jokes with the tailor which, when employees were around, compromised him; and there were jokes that he would rather not have heard. Deruga had not understood the tailor's pointed remarks. That was why he sent Deruga his bills half-yearly, whereas quality customers received theirs yearly. For two and a half years Deruga had owed him a thousand marks; it wasn't much and if it had been a quality customer he wouldn't be making a fuss over it; but, naturally, it was not a matter of indifference to him when it concerned a man of doubtful character. To the question of whether Deruga had spoken to him about an expected inheritance or about sources of money that were available to him, the tailor with dignified restraint replied that Deruga had prattled a great deal and talk pertaining to those matters could have occurred, but he, however, for years had followed the principle of neither repeating nor remembering his customers' confidences, and as a result he was no longer in a position to recall it. Deruga's prattle appeared too trivial for him to burden his memory with it.

The next witness, Deruga's barber, hotly insisted that without a doubt the doctor would have paid him the amount outstanding, if he'd reminded him. But Dr. Deruga was far too dear to him, a man after his own heart, brilliant and noble, a man whom he had always considered it an honour to serve. His eyes would penetrate a man's innermost being; he never let himself be dazzled by show-offs; and he never

missed the tiniest detail. "And if he never paid me a penny, gentlemen," he concluded with a flourish, "I would devote all my ability to him and never cease telling what a great man he is."

"Did Deruga visit you," asked the Presiding Judge, "after he'd been informed of his inheritance?"

"I may flatter myself to have been the first," said the barber, "to whom the doctor poured out his heart about this occurrence."

" 'Now I shall pay you royally'," he told me, "because you deserve it, as much for your skill as your steadfast convictions. Now and then, you see, as the mood took him, the doctor would speak to me in a familiar way. Regarding any payment I replied that he could as he wished so long as he didn't take away his custom. 'You've a poor knowledge of Deruga,' he exclaimed. 'Do you think I value your shop any the less because its in a little side-street and doesn't have golden mirrors and arty-looking chairs? And were I the Emperor of China I would let myself be shaved by your masterly hand sitting on this shabby but comfortable chair. I hate and detest money and if I didn't need to have it in order to keep human pests at a distance, I'd chuck the whole inheritance into the next gutter I came to.'"

With a scornful laugh the Prosecutor despairingly shook his head. "Quo usque" was written all over his face: was the man done shouting his sins to heaven?

"Did the accused visit you daily?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"I would say daily in general," replied the barber, "Not only me, my customers missed him most terribly when some days he didn't appear."

"Do you remember if he appeared on the second and third of October last year?"

"I remember," said the barber, "not seeing him for a couple of days sometime in late summer. But I didn't pay attention to the date."

"And when he returned you don't even remember what reason he gave you for his absence? Bearing in mind your relation with him," asked Dr. Zeunemann, adding in a somewhat sterner tone: "Can we assume you asked him about it?"

"As it happens," remarked the barber, "I do remember refraining from asking him because he was so silent and lost in his thoughts. I may only be a barber," he declared haughtily, "but I have enough inborn tact not to encroach upon a noble gentleman's trust when I feel that composure and seriousness are called for. With the doctor especially I've never tried to sound him out or encouraged him to talk if he appeared lost in thought or in a dark mood."

"What sorts of things went through your mind," pursued the Presiding Judge, "about the absence of the accused and his unusually serious mood?"

"None at all," said the barber, his tone a blend of mild disapproval and correctness. "Not a single one."

Dr. Zeunemann gave up and was just about to excuse the witness when the Prosecutor announced that he had a

question he'd like to put to him.

"Did the accused in the late summer of last year or even earlier buy or borrow a wig or a false beard or both from you?"

"I regret," said the barber courteously with a gloating smile, "but I don't carry articles of that kind. In a small, modest, out of the way shop like mine it wouldn't be worth my while."

It was already well into evening when the court rose. Councillor Fein laid his hand on Deruga's shoulder and the doctor, who was sitting there with his chin propped in his hand, turned to face him, his eyes blinking, uncertain.

"Good God, man, I do believe you've been asleep, have you?" the Councillor asked, wavering between astonishment and outrage.

"I think so," said Deruga. "The last thing I saw was the tailor chap. He revolted and bored me so much I just closed my eyes and was off in a jiffy. I picked up the knack at university where I was often tired. I could sleep for hours during lectures without anyone noticing, except for my friend, Carlo Bussi, who sat next to me. O sad youth and sweet memory!"

Part two

The following day's hearing opened with an announcement by Dr.Zeunemann that a female witness from Ragusa had arrived and had asked to give testimony rightaway so that she could get back to her family as soon as possible. Dr.Zeunemann was less of a mind to accede to her offer because he didn't consider it important, and it was only at the request of the defence that she was given permission. There was always the chance one could derive useful information about the behaviour of the accused towards his divorced wife during the early days of their marriage.

At a nod from Dr.Zeunemann there entered a lady of middle height bedecked with a brick-red caparison. Her flame-red hair was pinned up in umpteen quiffs and puffs and topped by a large hat from which tumbled a Niagara of white and blue ostrich feathers. She took a few steps forward, paused, and with an expectant smile on her lips looked searchingly about her. Evidently she'd been told where the accused was seated for her gaze lingered at the spot, though at first she was none the wiser.

Suddenly she let out a scream and shouted "Dodo" in a squealing voice and ran across to Deruga with her arms outstretched. However, she hadn't reached him before the court usher who had shown her in had got hold of her and positioned her facing the judges in front of the little table where she would take the oath.

"Sorry," she said, pulling out her handkerchief, "but it was too much for me, seeing him again after so many years! The change in him! And yet still that same sweet, silly face! If you put a pan of red-hot coals here in front of

me, Your Honour, I swear to you I'd hold my hand in it to prove his innocence."

"Unfortunately the matter is not so simple," said Dr. Zeunemann with benevolent superiority. "On the other hand you could make our work very much easier and be of assistance to the accused if you could keep what you have to say short, clear and consistent. You are Rosine Schmid born Vogelfrei, wife of an army captain, and are forty-four years old?"

"Yes, I am," she replied, "I'm not one of those women who are ashamed of their age. Besides men as well do what they can to appear younger, especially in the military, and they would do even more if as much depended on it as it does with us women."

"Frau Schmid," said the Presiding Judge, "you know the accused, Sigismondo Enea Deruga, but you are not related to him. Would you be so kind as to give us an account, avoiding all unnecessary details, of when and under what circumstances you became acquainted with him?"

"I will do that with pleasure," said Frau Schmid brightly. "I will tell you everything I know, because that's what I've come here to do. And if I had to travel to the end of the earth, I said to my husband, I'd do it to get Dodo out of a jam. He deserves that from me, so good and kind as he always was. And anyway he couldn't have done it because even if 'Potful of Mice' could be a bit madcap and unpredictable he certainly didn't murder a Christian soul, least of all that sweet soul, his wife."

"How do you come to call the accused 'Potful of Mice'?" asked Dr. Zeunemann.

"That's what it's called," explained Frau Schmid. "The figure in the fireworks. It's usually the last thing you see and there's so much crackling and pelting you'd think you had a fire-spitting mountain in front of you. It was a sort of nickname his wife had given him because sometimes he'd get himself into such a rage and spit smoke and fire that she was frightened of him."

"Peculiar nickname," observed the Presiding Judge.

"O, Your Honour, said Frau Schmid, laughing, "he meant no harm by it—no more dangerous than a potful of mice: the name fitted him so well we called him it; mind you, with me being such a young girl it was hardly proper for me to say it."

"I ask for it to be noted," said the Prosecutor, "that according to the testimony from the witness, the then Frau Deruga was frightened of her husband."

Frau Schmid, wife of Captain Schmid, turned swiftly to the speaker and with the blood rushing to her face said: "If you think you've gained an advantage over the doctor just because I said he can flare up, then you are mightily mistaken. It's not those who flare up who are the worst—and, as the saying goes: 'barking dogs don't bite.' I've often said to my husband: 'For all I care you can rant and curse, yes, even bring God's name into it, but moaning, giving long looks and grousing and not letting up, that's what I can't stand, and it's my belief that anyone who never boils over, then their heart's not in the right place."

With a movement of his hand the Presiding Judge signalled her to stop and said: "Frau Schmid, what you have told us is very valuable but perhaps you could tell us now how you came to be acquainted with the accused!"

"Willingly, willingly," Frau Schmid replied. "All the way here I kept on thinking about then; for all it was twenty-two years ago it could have been yesterday. Yes, twenty-two years it is now, and I was twenty-one at the time. Grandmother had just lost a lot of money doing the lottery. She may have imagined herself a model of good sense, but she couldn't live without gambling. And if ever she managed to get some money together, it had to be gambled. That would infuriate Grandfather, but he wouldn't say a word, he wouldn't dare; he would pull a long face and occasionally drop some sarcastic remark. Grandmother wanted to earn it all back and fixed up the old summerhouse by the garden fence to rent it out, and this meant writing an advertisement for the newspaper. I remember it as if it was yesterday, us sitting round the table under the lamp, struggling to get the German wording right. The thing was, Grandmother wasn't familiar with written German, and Grandfather was having nothing to do with it. In the first place, he said, it just wasn't done for anyone of officer rank to rent out rooms--by then he'd been out of the service for a long time, but he was indeed a captain--and in the second place he couldn't allow foreigners in his house, and in the third place it was a disgrace to be trying to talk unsuspecting folk into renting that old shack as place to live."

"Apparently your Grandmother wasn't German," interrupted the Presiding Judge, "seeing that she wasn't fluent in German?"

"No, of course not," answered Frau Schmid. "She came from Bosnia, but she was a very beautiful woman, and well educated besides, only not in the sciences."

"And your parents?" asked Dr. Zeunemann.

"Yes, my parents were also from there," said Frau Schmid, flushing a little, "but they died too early for me to have remembered them and actually I looked on my Grandfather and my Grandmother as my parents. Anyway, to go on with my story: when Grandfather said what he said my Grandmother got into a fury and said that Emperor Joseph or Ferdinand or Maximilian, I can't remember, had built that summerhouse for his mistress at a time when all around was nothing but forest and heathland, and there was still the remains of a painting on the ceiling and a stone vase, broken though, on the stairs. Anyway she had no intention of talking anyone into renting it, just showing it to them; they could have a good look round and then, God willing, go back home if it didn't suit them. Whenever Grandmother was in one of her hot tempers she looked very majestic; she had a Roman nose like a parrot, only lovelier, eyes like diamonds and thick white hair that rose on her head like a mountain of snow. To pacify her, Grandfather, in the end, helped her with the advertisement which finally read: 'Here is an attractive summerhouse to let, useable also in winter if desired, situated in green surroundings and partly furnished. Especially suitable for a young married couple.' Grandmother, you see, in the beginning had wanted to write: 'for young lovers'. But that almost made Grandfather lose his temper and he said Grandmother would ruin his honour

and good name and that she was worse than a gypsy. So Grandmother gave way because she had a great respect for Grandfather's refinement and his knowledge of the world, and 'young married couple' was put in instead."

"And Dr. Deruga and his wife answered the advertisement?" asked the Presiding Judge. "When was that?"

"Twenty-two years ago, as I've already said," answered Frau Schmid. "It may have been in May."

"It was July," Deruga said. "Sitting under the lime trees in the evening we could smell the blossom, and as we went through the garden gate the roses in the triumphal arch were flowering."

Everyone looked in astonishment in the direction of the accused whose pleasant voice and melodic tone they were hearing for the first time; what he'd said had sounded almost like a brief song. The flamboyantly-coloured woman betrayed an inclination to run to him again, but she suppressed it and said simply: "You're right, it was July. You're the one who's best at remembering, and you could tell a story far, far better and more beautifully than I could."

"Diagonally across from our pavilion," continued Deruga, "one could see the constellation of the Great Bear, and when we came home at night, hand in hand, Mingo and I, I looked at it and thought: 'How soon, Time's Winged Chariot, it will be when you take us away from these brief, foolish moments and into the nameless dark.'"

"Yes, I most likely heard you saying something like that," added Frau Schmid brightly, "because the following summer when the Great Bear was in the sky it always seemed to me so blank, and, of course, there was no one sitting there except me."

"So you still thought of us now and then, Brutta?" asked Deruga.

Frau Schmid pulled out her handkerchief and burst into tears. "Oh," she sobbed, "it really tugs at my heartstrings when you call me by that name. No one has called me that for years; Grandfather and Grandmother are long gone, and I can't face going back to the old house. Who knows if the Great Bear still looks down from above!"

The Presiding Judge now took up the threads of testimony again by bidding Frau Schmid calm herself and asking her if the Derugas gave the impression of being a happy couple and if her grandparents had liked them.

"And how!" said Frau Schmid, "especially the doctor. Grandpa, naturally, preferred the wife but he managed to keep himself in check. However, whenever Grandma took a liking to someone, she left no one in any doubt. And from the first moment onwards you'd hear her say: 'Now there's a man who'd have done for me.'"

"How did she come to say that?" asked Dr. Zeunemann. "And you, was he sometimes attentive towards you?"

"Not one bit!" said Frau Schmid. "He had a way of joking with me, that's all. For instance he was always telling me that I was so ugly folk could only bear to look at me with one eye closed; and whenever I happened to be in his way he'd screw up one eye first and then the other. He'd say it

was to protect them. And the faces he'd be pulling as well were so funny I couldn't stop laughing and Grandma would laugh too, except it did bother her a little. By the way, she would never vent her feelings on him, only on me and all in all, to tell the truth, I had to put up with a lot; she was rash and ill-tempered, although in other ways she was a wonderful woman whom I will love and honour till my dying day."

"Did you not find the behaviour of the accused ungentle?" enquired the Presiding Judge.

"Heaven forbid!" said Frau Schmid. "If someone tells you you're ugly and says it like that, you take it you're pretty. Marriage never crossed my mind; he had a wife, hadn't he, and what's more she was someone I thought the world of. Grandma grew fond of her only by degrees, but she ended up being almost fonder of her than she was of the doctor. At first she found all sorts of things wrong with her: she was too old for the doctor—in point of fact there were a couple of years in it—but more especially, she wasn't passionate enough for such a good-looking and delightful man. If you looked closely there was nothing wrong with her face, except her eyes were too soft and uninteresting; and there was her never varying friendliness—friendliness that's always the same is like milk pudding: if you have to eat it every day, you get sick of it, whereas you'll never turn your nose up at a well-peppered goulash with plenty of onions. There was only one thing about her that Grandma gave her credit for: her neck. You see, the poor woman always went about with her neck bare, even though at that time it wasn't as much in fashion as it is nowadays, and whenever she walked through the garden—so lightly she could have had wings on her feet—Grandma would say: 'I don't care for her one bit but just once I'd love to give that neck of hers a kiss.'"

"One day, it must have been in October, because we'd picked the grapes, Grandma was in a particularly bad mood as she was, every year after the grape harvest. While the grapes were still standing Grandma got the idea in her head that they would be sweet, but come the tasting they were in fact sour once again. Next morning at breakfast she slapped my face because I'd knocked my coffee cup over. It was because she'd pushed me, I told her, but she said that was no excuse as I'd been gawping at her like a dimwit. To add insult to injury she told me that if at least I'd been clever it would have been all right, but being ugly and stupid, it was no wonder the doctor hadn't wanted me; the fact that he'd never even known me when he was a bachelor, and for that reason alone couldn't have married me, never once crossed her mind. She said that when I was in the kitchen I went about things as if I were a fool, and wedded bliss depended on cooking, and day in day out I'm still thankful she made a big thing about it, especially when my husband tells me that the cooking in the finest hotels in Vienna and Prague doesn't taste as good as it does at home, and he's been around right enough and knows what he's talking about.

"Going back to where I was, that was the day I was going to make a risotto, and as I'd already made one with Grandma looking on, I thought I couldn't possibly go wrong. So I chopped my onions and liver and everything and set it all cooking and suddenly I felt famished. I knew for certain there'd be the odd bunch of grapes still on the vine and

that I could help myself without Grandma knowing. I added a little more meat stock, thinking that way I could leave things for a little while. Really, you see, risotto needs to be stirred constantly, and I knew that well enough, but anyway I was a bit carried away with myself and wasn't thinking.

"When I think about it now, I still can't understand, but when you're young your mind keeps flitting from one thing to another, picturing what the future holds for you: admirers, refusals, marriage, and so on, and truth to tell, with all that day dreaming, I clean forgot about the midday meal. All of a sudden Grandma is standing in front of me with her bed-jacket on and her face as red as inside a hot oven. She screams: 'There she is, see, nicking, the girl who's burnt the whole risotto for me!'

"True enough, I could smell it myself through the kitchen window above where we were standing and its beyond my comprehension why I hadn't noticed it before. Next thing she pounced on me, took hold of my hair with one hand and started to beat me with the other so that I felt as if I'd been caught by a whirlwind that was pulling me round in circles with it. I wasn't in any pain—I was too amazed to feel anything. But I was even more amazed when it came Grandma's turn to get caught by another whirlwind that pulled her backwards, and there, standing between us like the angel with the fiery sword that drove Adam and Eve from Paradise, was Dr. Deruga's wife, and on this occasion her eyes weren't blue as before but black and they were sparkling, so it looked like to me in my excitement.

"'Let go of the child, you abominable, godless hyena!' she shouted as loud and hard as she could, her having not much of a voice; then, after a short pause, she said, more mildly and gently: 'Shrew, I meant to say.' The way she said it probably sounded a bit comical to her as well, because a smile started at the corner of her mouth, and then Grandma laughed straight out and when I heard that I laughed so much I was positively screeching and I threw my arms round Frau Deruga's neck as tears of laughter sprang from her eyes."

While this account was progressing not only the Presiding Judge but Dr. Bernburger as well were discreetly observing the accused, whose expression and long, beautifully shaped eyes that glittered like the scales of a silverfish clearly showed him to be re-living the past. He appeared to have entirely forgotten where he was or why; he spoke in an even voice to his old friend: "Poor Marmotte"—his pet name for his wife—"poor, good, faint-hearted woman. Later on she defended her child against me in just the same way, even though she, of course, deserved her punishment, as you did then, Brutta. But tell some more. What did Grandma do?"

"Grandma's eyes," the army captain's wife continued, "were also wet, but not just from laughing but because she was moved, moved by the doctor's wife, and she made no secret of it; for, as has already been said, sharp tongued and quick tempered as she was, there was nothing false about her and she didn't hesitate to acknowledge a wrong once she's recognised it. She stood with her hands on her hips and said: "So, that's what still water does—it turns into a proper firebrand! No fool like an old fool and that's me. You've made me so happy, if I were our doctor, I'd marry you on the spot. And now I must kiss you on your lovely

neck. With that she hugged the doctor's wife and kissed her not only on the neck but also on both cheeks, and then she said that the risotto business should be forgiven and forgotten and she would see to the midday meal, because she could cook a better meal than any you might expect from a godless hyena. In fact it took her one hour to put together the finest of meals, namely meat vol-au-vents and apricot dumplings, and to this day I don't know how she did it because those are dishes that take time to make. Mind you, I had to lend a hand and I did receive nudges and pinches, but it didn't matter because she accompanied them with an amused look on her face.

"Afterwards as we were eating our meal, which poor Marmotte—I mean the doctor's wife—had to share as well, Grandma talked a lot about bringing up children and how girls in particular had to learn not to be so pernickety and sensitive because living with a man wasn't a bed of roses, and if the girl weren't thick-skinned and couldn't watch out for herself, then woe betide her; whiners and doormats were simply looked down upon. Men considered a woman who had nothing to offer as a burden; a girl had to have money or be able to cook. Poor Marmotte proudly stated that her husband wasn't like that, but Grandma, who until now had made such a fuss about him, said there were no exceptions, they were all the same, and if on occasion love had rendered the man unselfish, then afterwards he'd hate the woman twice as much for having blinded him with it."

"Why do you always say 'poor Marmotte'?" asked the Presiding Judge who had listened with exceptional patience.

The army captain's wife paused, somewhat taken aback. "Well, because she's dead." she answered.

"I see," said Dr. Zeunemann, "didn't you speak of her like that when she was alive?"

"Heaven forbid!" said Frau Schmid, "On the contrary, to me she seemed a person to be envied. Although yes, there was something helpless about her and there were times when she looked sad as well, and anxious, and its those times when I probably called her 'poor Marmotte'."

"Did you know why she was sometimes sad?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"Why?" Deruga joined in scornfully. "I can tell you why. Because she didn't love her husband as she should have because she was thinking of someone else who would suit her better and because she was afraid of my jealousy. We Italians don't have milk or water in our veins but blood, and our eyes go blood red when we lose our temper."

The captain's wife shot Deruga a startled, disapproving look, and, turning to the the Presiding Judge said: "He's just having us on. He always was a joker and he loved pulling people's legs and giving them frights." Then once more she turned to look at Deruga: "Why then did Marmotte marry you? A child could see how dearly she loved you."

Deruga already had his head in his hands, gazing down so no one could see his face, and there was no sign that he cared any more.

Frau Schmid had now turned to the Presiding Judge. "If she was afraid of him, " she resumed, "then it certainly wasn't his fault, it was due to her being extraordinarily

fearful. Once, during the night there was something to do with a drunk. I can't exactly remember much but I know we all teased her about it."

The Presiding Judge encouraged Frau Schmid to remember, or else to describe what she still knew about it. Then, when nothing had occurred to her, he asked Deruga if he could possibly recall anything.

Deruga lifted his head, looking as if he had no idea what they were talking about.

"O you do know, Doctor, dear," coaxed Frau Schmid. "One night a drunk came bawling past the pavilion and he was making such a din that your wife woke up and thought it was coming from under your window. It would have been sometime in November because it was raining and a storm was blowing and you had no desire to get up and you pretended to be asleep while your wife was almost dying of fright. That's it more or less. Don't you remember any more?"

"Ah yes," said Deruga, "it prompted an exceptional tenderness in my wife. I woke up because she was snuggling up to me and her head was pressed close to my neck and while I was still nurturing the hope in my dream that she had suddenly been overcome with passion for me she was pleading with me to save her from the drunkard: 'He's under the window. Any minute now he'll be in here. What shall we do? O what shall we do? At least shut the window.'

"That's the last thing I'll do," I exclaimed, 'now that you're giving me some loving again'-and I rather nastily emphasised my words, because she let go of me, turned her head away, and began to cry. Putting much more sting into what I was saying I told her she shouldn't be so stupid as to cry, and anyway even if she felt so unfortunate and was all-aquiver, her life wasn't at stake. And she said that even if she were so unfortunate as to die, she certainly had no wish for some vile drunk to lay hands on her and throttle her, and that she hadn't actually said that she felt unfortunate.'

"The fellow is outside, lying in the gutter, and he will sing, and then he'll fall asleep," I said, then I pretended to be asleep so she could be tortured by her fear. Half an hour later the howling stopped and straight after that she fell into a deep, peaceful sleep, leaving me lying awake beside her, looking at her delightful white neck and thinking how easy it would be for me to squeeze her throat almost without her knowing."

With a triumphant twitch of his eyebrows and an upward pointing of his index finger, and with his mouth already open, the Prosecutor was just about to speak when the Justicial Councillor lifted his hand to stop him, and, displaying the indifference of someone answering a pointless question, said: "He didn't actually do it. Barking dogs don't bite, as our witness has already said."

Before the Prosecutor could utter a sound Dr. Zeunemann, having communicated his request for agreement by means of courteous looks to his left and right declared without further ado that the session would adjourn for lunch. At three o'clock he wanted to put a few more questions to the army captain's wife, and if his colleagues consented she could then depart. The night train for Vienna left at eight o'clock.

Part three

Dr. Bernburger had attended the hearing in the company of Dr. von Wydenbruck, a young neurologist whom he had befriended, and the two of them left the courthouse together.

The gentlemen were remarkably dissimilar but they had become close through their shared interest in psychology and matters pertaining to it, especially since Bernburger, who suffered from nervous depression as a result of overwork, had put himself in Dr. von Wydenbruck's hands and was following his method of treatment. Whereas Bernburger was small, of stunted growth, with weak limbs but with an expressive face and untiringly attentive eyes, Dr. von Wydenbruck's figure was taller, slimmer, more elegant, and his refined features were such that the closer one looked at them, the more they seemed to disappear. The way he walked might be described as being 'elastic' and 'lithe': it was as if he were constantly on the alert to get out of the way or to fit in with another's wishes, but in reality he was merely extending his highly manoeuvrable antennae, and remained firmly footed on the strong, untrammelled, unaltering ground of his being.

"Once again we're dealing with a couple of hysterics," he said as they walked down the wide street leading to the centre of the town.

"Surely you don't take Deruga for an hysteric?" said Dr. Bernburger earnestly, looking up at his companion. "I judge him quite differently. I'm certain he committed the murder and that he did so, in fact, without getting all worked up, but with matchless calm, taking it for granted that he'd make no mistake that might give him away. It's well known that criminals who set about their work having considered everything carefully, make some slip that proves their undoing. When he'd done the deed he'd behave as he normally would, almost mechanically, and leave not a clue behind."

"Very nicely observed," complimented Dr. von Wydenbruck. "Only unconscious actions are lively and spontaneous and, one might say, faultless and infallible. And, I might also add, flawless."

"Yes, inherently so, if you like, as regards their appropriateness," replied Bernburger, "however, that's not our standpoint right now, otherwise every immoral person would be flawless in his immoral actions."

"And isn't that what he is?" asked Wydenbruck. "But Deruda," he went on, "doesn't, in my opinion, belong in that that category. I take him and no less his wife to be morally sound, but hysterical as well. These days it is only appropriate for those in the lowest orders; but if it occurs in educated circles it points to either hysteria or perversion."

"That's so for us," said Bernburger, "but not for Italians. By the way, we too have troubles and passions that, as is

the way of things, can turn an educated person into a murderer, jealousy, for example."

"I would like to declare jealousy itself to be demonic," the other said. "Anyhow, it's my belief that what we're dealing with here is an hysterical desire to murder, which is nothing but a repressed urge to love. Although his wife loved him, as the jolly Brutta testified, Deruga finds no gratification. In order to squeeze more out, he excites fear, her anxiety doubles his pleasure, yet his craving remains unassuaged and is not extinguished even when he looks down at her dead body. These hapless individuals are the stuff of vampire legend."

"Of that I have no doubt," said Dr. Bernburger. "It may well be that every man has something of the vampire in him; however, I can't say I approve of your methods which give no consideration whatsoever to exterior motives that exist and have a bearing on things one way or another."

"Yes, with healthy people," answered Wydenbruck. "With sick people, hardly, or only to be deliberately exploited. With Deruga his truly remarkable ability to switch himself off whenever it suits him indicates hysteria. He's extremely irritable, is easily brought to tears, and the next moment it's as if he were made of stone. That's when he's not there, as it were. If he put his mind to it perhaps he could actually split himself in two and then we'd have doppelganging before our very eyes."

"And the wife?" prompted Bernburger. "What makes you think the wife is an hysteric?"

"Her timorousness is a sufficient symptom," said Dr. von Wydenbruck. "Note well how the desire to murder and timorousness go hand in hand. It's highly remarkable the way such dispositions are drawn magnetically to each other and so enable the fundamental peculiarities of their separate natures to rise, all in a muddle, to their highest point and fulfil their destiny. Breaking through all barriers the drive to self-annihilation shows itself to be a baffling passion."

It was as if these same thoughts had communicated themselves to Councillor Fein, for when he met his client after the end of the session he said to him: "Listen, Doctor, if we made you out to be mentally ill, I believe we'd have a chance."

"Do as you wish," said Deruga. "Anyway I leave everything to you. I'm a very good person and I say what my eyes and ears tell me, so it's easily possible that I'm taken for a madman."

The Councillor expressed his intention of joining Deruga for the midday meal. By now old Reichardt would have one of his renowned dishes all ready, and, as far as he knew, quite a decent wine to go with it. And without a drop of wine, a fine cigar and a cup of good coffee, how could he possibly go on working after three o'clock.

"It's good you're accompanying me," said Deruga, "that way we can have a further chat—but listen," he said as a thought suddenly struck him, "are you just coming along out of sympathy for me, or is it that you're wanting to sound me out?"

"Yes, my friend," the Councillor laughed, "Why else am I here? After all your interests are my concern, and if you were sensible you would tell me everything in advance instead of blurting it out at an unsuitable time and disadvantaging yourself. My! But you make a fellow's work difficult."

"If I happen unexpectedly to see an old friend again after twenty years," Deruga offered by way of apology, "naturally I want to have a natter with them. You should have warned me. It's not a big thing with me."

In Deruga's small, old-fashioned looking room the table was already laid and only needed to be set for one more. Presently, when the Councillor had quelled his initial hunger he leant comfortably back in his chair and said: "You certainly appear to have loved your wife exceedingly."

"How so?" asked Deruga coolly. "When you're on honeymoon it's natural. God only knows how many others I've loved since then."

"Well, yes," allowed the Councillor, "All the same, one needs to love a woman very much to get oneself into such a fix on her account."

"In the first place I couldn't foresee it, and in the second I would have done the same for anyone, and it's bad enough that not everybody would. If a hunter didn't make all haste to despatch a wounded animal, he'd rightly be called a brute. People suffering agonies are watched over for weeks, for months, before they're able to die, and they're given no help at all. So much for brotherly love. As if one could ever give a more precious gift than death. If my life were no longer of any use to me, I'd be a jolly sight more grateful to those who would end it for me than to those who gave it to me."

"But there are two sides to it, old chap," said the Councillor. "We could end up with every nephew murdering his rich uncle and saying he'd done it out of compassion."

Instantly the blood rushed to Deruga's face. "What do you mean by that? That's a nasty insinuation and I won't tolerate it."

"Understand," said the Councillor placatingly, "I was speaking entirely objectively, and if it touches you on the raw every time we're not going to get anywhere. Humans are just like centaurs and along with good motives there are bad ones. And if one person kills another one whose death makes him better off than you at least have to reckon with the possibility that he might, just might have done it in part for what he stood to gain."

"You know," said Deruga, "I had no notion of my wife's will."

"That is to say, that's what you told me," the Councillor corrected him calmly.

"If you don't believe what I say," Deruga shouted, beside himself with anger, "then I shan't speak to you at all ever again. If you thought me a low, thieving murderer, what made you undertake my defence? That's unprincipled, just as unprincipled as me killing my wife so I could inherit from her. And it's unprincipled of you to associate with me and to put on a mask of goodwill and affection."

His face had gone a greyish colour and without his being aware of it his slim, brown hand had taken hold of his knife.

"See here now," said the Councillor good-naturedly, "are you after cutting my throat between cheese and coffee?-you being one of these rough Italians. I should wear protection under my clothes before I approach you."

"Before insulting me, certainly," came Deruga's rejoinder, "though it wouldn't be much use."

"Is it an insult," pursued the Councillor, "if I say I think it's possible you had knowledge of your wife's will. Does it mean I'm saying that it led you to a certain course of action? All I'm saying is the possibility of its being a factor needs to be considered."

Deruga dropped the knife onto the table and leant back wearily in his chair. "The possibility can be ruled out," he said, "because the assumption cannot be made in the first place. You know that the will couldn't have influenced me, for the simple reason that I had no idea it existed. You know that because I told you and you have to believe me. The so-called public, being stupid and not knowing me, don't need to believe me, but it's what I require of you."

The Counsellor remained silent for a while, and then he spoke: "For once, my good friend, try to practise yourself some of the justice that you demand in such copious amounts from others. It was only a short time ago that I first had the pleasure of meeting you and I have to say I got to know you at a time when your circumstances were very ambiguous. People didn't have many good things to say about you. You lead a dissolute life; you only work when you you've not a penny left in your pocket, even though you're highly intelligent and belong to a well-rewarded profession. You've deliberately let yourself go to the dogs and you could be described as a mischievous vagabond. Would it not be thoughtless or stupid of me to believe you, regardless of what the facts and valid surmises indicated? That being so, wouldn't you be the first to laugh at me and say: 'Old Fein's a typical German, dumb as a spud?'"

Deruga turned towards the Counsellor with a charming smile restored to his face. "For a German you're really rather smart," he said, "as well as being quite a decent fellow. But I don't see why you couldn't tell me the truth. Then this nasty, tedious episode needn't have begun."

The Counsellor gazed thoughtfully into his cigar smoke and shook his head. "I advised you according to what I thought best," he said. "You couldn't have proved that you committed the act out of pure, noble motives; conversely it cannot be proved that it was you who did it; for that to happen it would need completely new evidence to come to light. I think, therefore, that if you stick to your denial, I'll get you through. And that's certainly better than a couple of years jail, even if you've been picturing yourself in the comfy role of a Diogenes. The stakes will be high, but we may come away with a big win, if not, we'd only get piecework rate at best."

"Now you're not a mender, but an artist in cloth," said Deruga. "And I ought really to be the one in the mending room."

"A proper Italian can fit the role of playboy every bit as well as a nobleman," said the Councillor. "Once you're free and in possession of your fortune, you'll forget this brief, painful time and possibly begin a new life."

"Begin a new life?" laughed Deruga. "At forty-six! As if I haven't had enough of it already!"

"Well then, I shan't interfere any further," said the Counsellor, "You can carry on living like a tramp. At least my earlier advice got through to you and you accepted it willingly."

"I'll do anything you want," said Deruga, "if it means Baroness Truschkowitz, spiteful woman that she is, doesn't get the money; otherwise, for all I care, they could chop off my head or lock me up in prison. Life isn't worth too much struggle."

Part four

Spring sunlight flickered unsteadily in the wide street leading to the courthouse. Near the entrance Dr.von Wydenbruck encountered High Court Judge Zeunemann and having introduced himself he expressed his admiration for the way the Judge was managing the proceedings; he was very grateful for the insight being afforded him into a complex psyche; he was convinced that High Court Judge Zeunemann would throw still more light into its furthest depths.

"It's my custom to phrase my questions in such a way," said the Judge, "that all matters concerning the external and internal facts of the case are revealed not 'with levers and screws', you understand, but involuntarily, like a leaf unfurling."

"Yes, I've noticed." said a delighted Dr.von Wydenbruck. "It's marvellous. You simply create in a sense the right atmosphere, and then let the real-life drama unfold. Thus far you've gone by the light of day, perhaps at some point you'll do the same by night and raise up spectres from the Hades of the soul."

"You're a psychologist and you're wanting to make a study of it?"

"'From your table richly-spread many crumbs do fall'," obliged Dr.von Wydenbruck.

They were still there on the wide flight of steps finishing their conversation when three o'clock struck. "I'm not able to do as much in that direction as you imagine," declared the High Court Judge. "Mind you these days no criminologist can do without some information on the psyche. I use the term 'psyche' on purpose in order to convey that in my opinion one isn't dealing here with a science as such but with a feeling which you might call 'native genius'. I allow myself to be guided far more by my feeling than by my reckoning; you'll be surprised hearing an opinion like that from a jurist."

While Dr.von Wydenbruck was expressing his astonishment and admiration the courtroom had been filling up, and one of the jurors, a poultry-breeder by the name of Kocherle,

asked the foreman of the jury, Winkler, a prominent businessman sitting next to him, who was the elegant lady with the long-handled, golden lorgnette, seated in the front row of the hall.

"Why, that's Baroness Truschkowitz," said Winkler. "She's the one who set all this in motion. Don't you know her?"

"So that's what she looks like!" the other exclaimed in amazement. "I'd have thought she'd be shabby looking and underfed, being as how she talked about the poor state of her children and how her life was one unending struggle."

Winkler, the businessman, gave a shrug. "The nobility," he said, "have their own ideas about what one needs and what one may claim to need. By the way, if anyone has lot already, and can get even more, they never say no."

Kocherle, the poultry-breeder, acknowledged this, but he still found it crude the way she dressed in such a costly way and talked as if her children were whimpering for their daily bread.

"But the way she dresses," commented another, "is very tasteful."

"And expensive," Winkler added, casting an appraising eye over her. "The egret feathers on her hat...say a hundred marks; the diamonds in the handle of her lorgnette...maybe a thousand marks."

"Are they genuine diamonds?" asked Kocherle, wide-eyed.

"O yes, imitation stones haven't got that fire," said Winkler, almost passionately. "If we ever reach the stage where diamonds can be produced artificially then, as I see it, the chemical formula may be correct but the fire of the natural stones is something on its own. Nothing will change my mind. Nature simply cannot be matched."

"Are those diamonds, then, that she has on her hat?" asked the poultry-breeder.

"Heaven preserve us! No." answered the businessman disapprovingly. "A lady like that is too knowledgeable in questions of taste. It's a fancy clasp that's cost about fifty marks. Really! you're a veritable child in such matters."

"True," conceded Kocherle, "If my wife didn't check occasionally on how I looked you wouldn't know me from a farmhand. And I'll be quite frank with you, I can't tell the difference between what's called an elegant woman of the world and a so-called lady of the demimonde."

"You say so," said Winkler, "but it's not like that at all. Which is why one needs to get around."

"Well then, take this Truschkowitz woman, what type is she?" asked Kocherle, "Wouldn't you say she was typically borderline?"

"See here," said Winkler reddening with shock and annoyance, "she is every inch an elegant woman of the world! Her attire tones in well and is discretion itself."

"Well, you know," objected the other, "a clever lady of the demi-monde should have no trouble copying her. It's something that can easily be learned."

"No," the businessman insisted, still red and agitated, "there are some things that cannot be learned, they can only be sensed. It can all hang on the tiniest detail."

The two men were interrupted by the entrance of the members of the court. Frau Schmid, the army captain's wife, was once more conducted to the witness stand and the Presiding asked her again to tell the truth and not withhold anything. He then summarised the result of her previous evidence: "Soon after his marriage to a woman some years older than himself, the accused moved into a summer dwelling on your grandparents' property in Laibach. The Derugas gave the impression of being a happy couple whose happiness was nevertheless marred by certain singularities of the husband, namely an irascibility that bordered on ferocity and a tendency to jealousy. As far as you know it was a jealousy that had no foundation. I think you'd agree that I've understood you correctly?"

"As to that, it's impossible for me to say," said Frau Schmid, "because it all happened such a long while ago. It could well be that poor old Mamotte, who was thirty by then, had taken a liking to someone once; and I even think it was so, because the doctor would have been an absolute fool to have deliberately made the story up to torment her and himself with."

"But you did say this morning," Dr. Zeunemann put to her, "that you considered it impossible that Dr. Deruga's wife had ever done anything that she could reproach herself for."

"'Could reproach herself for,'" repeated Frau Schmid, "There's never been any mention of it. Heavens above, you can have been sweet on someone at one time without it counting against you. I had a real fondness for our little doctor—well, that feeling was nipped in the bud, and if there'd been the odd kiss, then what of it? It's the ones that are too prissy that I trust least."

"Then you have no reason for thinking," asked Dr. Zeunemann "that Frau Deruga, as she then was, had continued any previous relationships?"

"Heaven forbid!" cried Frau Schmid, almost screaming, "What do you mean? That she'd been a loose woman—something absolutely despicable? Just try saying that to the doctor's face. He'll put you right. Say anything like that to him and he'll jump up and take you by the throat."

Dr. Zeunemann couldn't help smiling. "That being so, I prefer to stay with you," he said. "Then you maintain it's possible Frau Deruga, sometime before her marriage, was fond of someone, but you're convinced that afterwards all contact was broken. In view of the fact that the accused first set up practice in Leipzig, and in December gave up the summer-dwelling at your grandparents' did you have any contact with him and his wife afterwards?"

"They sent us a card announcing the birth of their little girl," said Frau Schmid, "who later died. Grandma made me a gift of the announcement and I have it still. I always had the feeling that they were special people, and for a long time I waited for something special happening to them. Not for one moment did I think anything like this would come along."

After several more questions had been asked about the visitors the Derugas had had, and how the Derugas spent their money, Frau Schmid was free to go and an elegant gentleman of about thirty-six took her place. He looked so immaculate he reminded one of a model in a fashion magazine, and even his features had an appropriate regularity; his skin, though, was not smooth and rosy but pale grey, weary, and somewhat haggard.

He made a bow, apportioning to the court the amount of respect he felt this state institution was entitled to, no matter how much higher in rank he stood, and together with other personal particulars made it known that his name was Peter Hase and was resident in Munich. He was then invited to tell the court how he had made the acquaintance of the accused.

"We were introduced to each other in the Kavalier Cafe which he frequented. It's not a cafe of any distinction but its comfortable and gets rather a lot of artists, seeing it was set up to cater for non-artists. Deruga is very well known there, and I had often heard him spoken of there as having an intriguing personality and being good company, so I was glad to make his acquaintance. He had his special seat at his special table where a somewhat mixed group would usually gather round him."

"Were there any gentlemen among them?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"As many as there were others," answered Peter Hase, "mainly from the bohemian world."

He pronounced the phrase with such lack of emphasis that it was impossible to sense whether he felt contempt or sympathy for it. At all events there was something unconnected about him; he seemed to move about in a world of nothing but white walls.

"Did you come to be on more personal terms with Deruga?"

"That, no," said Herr Hase, sparing Dr. Zeunemann the rebuke that he, Hase, might be thought in the least capable of entering into a close relationship with anyone at all, "but I always found him interesting whenever I ran into him."

"May I ask you," said the Presiding Judge, "to describe the quarrel that occurred between you and Deruga in the cafe you spoke of?"

Herr Hase bowed in assent. "Allow me to make a correction: in as much as it could be called a quarrel between Dr. Deruga and myself, seeing that I in no way took an active part in our first encounter. There had been a mining disaster that had taken the lives of a number of workers, and a collection was being made for the bereaved relatives. That afternoon a lady entered the cafe with a list of signatures and sums contributed."

"A lady?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"Woman, if you prefer," said Herr Hase. "She was very poorly clothed. She made towards our table and, as I was the one sitting closest, I wafted my hand or shook my head, giving her to understand that she needn't bother with us, for I find collections of any kind inappropriate in a place where you go for pleasure and amusement. Dr. Deruga, who possesses an exceptional talent for observation, had spotted the brief incident and just as the lady or woman

was about to leave he called her back. 'Why don't you come to us, my child?' he said. 'Come here. We'd like to sign for something too.' He then heaped reproaches on my head for being high handed with the lady and frightening her off without knowing what the rest wanted to do. To make an end of the matter I immediately grabbed hold of the list, entered my name and contribution and passed it on. When it reached Deruga he glanced through the entries and was infuriated—I could tell by his face—at the smallness of the amounts.

"'You see, dear child,' he said to the woman, 'these gentlemen here are rich and as a result of having to build themselves houses and having to buy cars and drink champagne, they've no money to spare for workers' wives and workers' children, of which there are already too many. I, by comparison, am poor and should really go and hang myself; as a result all I need is a rope and that costs very little; hence I am in a position to sign for three hundred marks, which I want you to pick up from my apartment at the address I've written. Meantime you can take this pin as a pledge.'

"With that he pulled from his cravat a curious and obviously very valuable pin which he put into the hand of the woman, who, already covered in embarrassment by Deruga's behaviour, at first refused to accept but finally had to give way. A couple of gentlemen who knew Dr. Deruga better than I told him that if we all signed for, say, five marks each it would bring in enough; after all, the intention never was to make the wives of the bereaved richer than us; he himself should see reason and give an amount that was commensurate with his circumstances. That goaded Dr. Deruga all the more. He was furious and in his rage he came out with all manner of expressions which, of course, I could repeat only in approximate terms."

The Presiding Judge asked him to do so, in so far as his memory permitted.

Herr Hase bowed. "This is approximately what he said: 'My circumstances? What do you know about my circumstances? In your eyes I'm a poor fool, and so you think I'm good for a laugh and that you can tell me what to do. You see me as some kind of court jester who's there to keep you amused and not make any demands. I could be like you and marry a rich woman and then be in the same position as you. Incidentally that need does not arise as my divorced wife's fortune is at my disposal. When she dies I'll be a rich man and probably just as tight-fisted as you are now; so my dear child, take my money while I'm still poor.'

"Now I ask you to still bear in mind," Peter Hase added, "that what I'm reporting I have carried in my memory, or failed to. It would be best if you asked Dr. Deruga directly whether or not he recognises the words I have repeated as being his."

Scarcely had the Presiding Judge turned his head towards Deruga when the latter shouted in amusement: "The whole account was superb and worthy of such an excellent writer. I make a much better impression in it than I would have thought possible. I most likely did say that, only, Herr Hase, decent as he is, has left out all the abuse that I heaped on him personally on account of his heartlessness, hypocrisy, emptiness, and the rest."

"I left out anything that wasn't absolutely relevant," said Herr Hase, facing the Presiding Judge squarely. "Admittedly I probably shouldn't have omitted his outbursts against me because they show clearly how it takes only a moment's excitement to put him at the mercy of his temperament, and one may draw conclusions from the remarks he makes at such times only with great reservation."

"I ask permission," said Councillor Fein, now on his feet, "to add something similar to the witness's very accurate observation. The conclusion to be drawn from his evidence is principally that one cannot take Deruga too seriously. One has to have been to Italy and got to know the Italians to be able to judge them correctly. The way he talks brings to mind the pathos that an Italian quack will use in the market place to extol the qualities of his corn plasters: 'Ladies and gentlemen, if your own brother were standing here, he couldn't serve you with greater honesty than I am doing. I'm standing here, not for my sake but for your sake; because what's a couple of pennies you give me compared with what I'm bringing you: a life free from pain, a triumphant stride, the favours of women, the admiration of men!'"

While the people in the hall were still laughing Dr. Zeunemann, his brow lightly wrinkled, said: "All the same, one shouldn't forget that Italians, shrewd people, know how to put their national idiosyncrasies to very good use, and anyone who frequently wears a mask certainly has a face of their own, even though it may be hard to tell which is the real one. At this juncture I don't want to take a philosophical line, I want to ascertain facts, hence I would like to point out that we have become acquainted with other similar expressions of the accused which he made when he was in complete control of his mental faculties. Additionally I would like to know, did the accused pay the sum of money that he had subscribed?" Herr Hase regretted that he could offer no information on the matter.

In the front row of jurors Herr Winkle stood up and said: "Perhaps the desired information is provided by the accused's cravat pin. It might be the same one that he pledged and has evidently redeemed!"

Deruga confirmed that it was the pin that had been returned to him on payment of the sum mentioned; he pulled it out and offered it for inspection.

"Did you really hand over three hundred marks?" asked Councillor Fein. "How was it you had that much money to hand?"

Deruga shrugged somewhat impatiently. "You think there's no way I could lay my hands any time on three hundred marks? In this instance, all I needed to do was to get the Italian Consulate to advance my payment for seeing to their translations, examinations, and so forth. Deruga's got brains in his skull, not potatoes."

The Presiding Judge meanwhile had been looking closely at the pin and he asked Herr Hase if it was the selfsame pin which the accused on the evening in question had given as a pledge, to which Peter Hase, having cast a discreet look at it, answered in the affirmative.

"It's a strikingly beautiful piece," said Dr. Zeunemann absorbed in the object before him which represented a

Moor's head with turban; the head itself consisted of a black pearl, and the turban of a white one, richly set with rubies and emeralds.

"A gift from my late wife," said Deruga as the pin was returned to him, "She said it was made for an Othello like me."

After this little incident the Presiding Judge asked the witness if he had anything further to add. For the first time a faint blush could be seen creeping across Herr Hase's face; the fact was that his attention had been distracted by Baroness Truschkowitz who was seated in the front row of the audience and was bending far forward, her eager eye fixed on the pin that the Presiding Judge was holding. The witness turned round startled and said that he knew of nothing that he could contribute to the matter, but was prepared to answer any further questions.

Peter Hase did not leave the courthouse at the conclusion of the sitting but waited for Dr. Zeunemann, introduced himself, and asked if he might put a few questions to him. The Presiding Judge took him along to his office.

The main thing Herr Hase wanted to know was what roughly was the kind of punishment the accused would face if, contrary to expectations, he were to be found guilty.

"Well, sir, you see," began Dr. Zeunemann, changing from his gown into his frock coat, "until now the charge has only been one of manslaughter and, that being the case, he could get off with a couple of years in jail. However, our Prosecutor actually looks upon it as murder, and, if any further circumstantial evidence comes to light, then the business can become serious. For example, if it were discovered that the man had knowledge of the will's content, then in all probability the opinion of the Prosecutor would prevail; and, if that happened, much as it pains me, we would have to proceed swiftly to have him arrested."

"May I ask," inquired Herr Hase, "how you assess the matter personally?"

"There's too much of a psychologist in me," said Dr. Zeunemann, "for me not to feel a certain interest in problem personalities. As to what the natural colour of this chameleon actually is, to tell you the truth I'm still none the wiser."

"Why does he have to have a natural colour, anyway?" said Herr Hase somewhat vigorously. "Shimmering changes come natural to these fantastic creatures. I feel a great sympathy for chameleons," he added after a pause.

"I understand. I understand," said Dr. Zeunemann. "Beautiful but slippery. The aesthetic way of looking at things is very different from the moral one, which, in turn, is not always identical with the legal one."

He was just about to take a broad-brimmed felt hat from the rack when there was a knock and at Dr. Zeunemann's gruff "Enter" Baroness Truschkowitz appeared on the threshold as the Prosecutor opened the door for her.

"Dear Judge," she said hurriedly, proffering a hand tightly enclosed in a white leather glove, "it's extremely intrusive of me I know, waylaying you in your sanctuary, and especially at this hour, but you're too chivalrous to

throw me out, and I'm too ignoble not to presume on your courtesy."

Dr. Zeunemann let out a comical sigh. "At least , Baroness, make it short."

She gave a light, youthful laugh which had in it a cooing note that was rather seductive, "I'll keep it really short," she said, "provided your Honour doesn't make more of it than is necessary. It concerns the pin you had in your hand today and returned it to that man. I recognised it as an heirloom from my great-grandmother, mine and my late cousin's great-grandmother. I find it intolerable knowing that this valuable keepsake is in his hands, and I should like you to see to it that it is handed over to me."

"To you, Baroness?" said Dr. Zeunemann in astonishment, "So it belongs to you, does it?"

"Of course it does," replied the Baroness, "Everyone knows I'm the nearest relative of the deceased."

Dr. Zeunemann was so taken aback that he automatically sat down without first motioning a chair for the Baroness. "Well," he said, "the pin definitely didn't belong to your cousin: she'd been happy to make a present of it."

"More's the pity," said the Baroness, "but she'd subsequently got divorced, and in a situation like that decent people return any present they've been given. What's more, he killed her. He simply can't be allowed to wear her pin."

The puzzled looks that passed between High Court Judge and Prosecutor had no effect on her whatsoever. "Well, then?," she asked with a forceful nod of encouragement. "You see, you're the one to dally."

"Since you told me to keep it short," said Dr. Zeunemann, who in the meantime had gathered his thoughts, "then I'll be blunt: your wish cannot be granted. Even if Dr. Deruga were to be convicted, we wouldn't be able to take from him what was his; but as yet he's not been convicted, and for now he's no more the killer of your late-- forgive me for saying--than you and I are."

"Your Honour!" exclaimed the Baroness, looking reproachfully at him with her blue-grey eyes, "is it then the very lawyers themselves who are losing all sense of what is natural and proper Law?"

"You will see justice done, Baroness," the Prosecutor hurriedly assured her, "I am convinced that, should our discernment and labour not succeed, Providence itself will bring the truth to light."

"And the pin?" asked the Baroness, "I collect things like this, and is this most beautiful piece, to which I have a rightful claim, going to remain in the hands of such a man?"

"For that you can hold your great-grandmother responsible, not us," said Dr. Zeunemann with a laugh, getting to his feet and reaching once more for his hat.

"You are a flint-hard, ironclad, impervious jurist," pouted the Baroness.

"But most tenderly responsive to the charms of beautiful ladies," he added appeasingly.

As they were both leaving the Baroness asked to be introduced to Peter Hase.

"It isn't as if I don't know you," she aimably informed the author, "I'm acquainted with your books and I admire them. Its a consolation for this abominable trial that it's brought about such a worthwhile meeting."

She invited him, if he was staying on, to call on her and her husband at their hotel; then, when she saw her car was waiting, she bade the two of them goodbye, adding with a smile: "I'll get the pin, I will: my senses tell me."

Together the two men walked on a little.

"How charming and attractive is the total lack of logic and objectivity in women," said Dr.Zeunemann, "For us men at any rate."

"And their cruelty," added Herr Hase by way of acknowledgement.

"I regard it more as thoughtlessness," said Dr.Zeunemann, "Incidentally, how old would you say Madame Baroness was? She has a grown up daughter, so she must be at least forty-two."

"Older, more likely," said Peter Hase, "She's always looks smart and has a very good eye for clothes."

"Naturally, naturally," said Dr.Zeunemann, "no work to do, no worries, that's what keeps one young."

Herr Winkler also was very taken with Baroness Truschkowitz and sought an opportunity to briefly quiz Dr.Bernburger about her. "She has charm, chic, grace," Herr Winkler told him, "but a dangerous amount of temperament."

"And that's where I come in: keeping it in check," said Dr. Bernburger.

"I've noticed," continued Herr Winkler, "that she avoids looking at Deruga, even though she's got a sharp eye for everything else. She sits herself so that he's not in her field of vision. Was there ever anything going on between them?"

"She doesn't know him at all," said Dr.Bernburger, "but she's hated him from the very beginning."

"Blind prejudice, then?"

"Well, yes," said Dr.Bernburger, "but that doesn't make him any better."

Herr Winkler laughed. "What's her husbands's reaction?" he asked.

"O, he gives her his arm and is never far from her," said Dr. Bernburger, "By the way, he's a nice man. There's something about his stupidity that you can't help commending."

"Being stupid and having a wife like that!" said Herr Winkler, "He's welcome!"

"Now you could be mistaken," countered the lawyer. "As to whether she has respect for him or for traditional values, I couldn't say. Maybe she's a cold coquette."

Herr Winkler shuddered. "Wouldn't do for me," he said, "I think I'd prefer to be cheated on."

Part five

Opening the afternoon session, the Presiding Judge announced that the testimonies of the next witnesses would deal with the last days in the life of Frau Swieter, and that he hoped that from this angle more would come to light regarding the series of events that were not as yet fully explained. Until now it had been assumed that the accused had had no knowledge of the contents of the will. The only person who had known about it was the closest friend of the deceased, Fraulein Kunigunde Schwertfeger. It was not impossible for her testimony—should she relinquish the hesitancy which she had maintained until now—to alter the picture considerably.

It was obvious to everyone that it took a real effort of will for Fraulein Schwertfeger to come into the room. She was dressed simply, oblivious of fashion, unobtrusive in appearance, one whose qualities and charm are not immediately discernible, yet both were richly to be found in her almost too large, wide-open, grey eyes, in her too short nose, in the small and constantly open mouth, and in her facial expressions that were constantly in motion across her uneven features. Probably because she was conscious of her childlike inability to pretend, and her tendency to talk and chatter unguardedly, she readily armed herself, when in the company of strangers, with wariness and reticence, which, together with her shyness in public, made her appear like a little caged animal that is used to being teased and having to defend itself.

When Dr. Zeunemann had administered the oath to her, he invited her to tell him anything, no matter what, that could help throw some light on the case. There were people, he added, who considered themselves to be truth-loving but took the view that it was allowable, indeed, even worthy, in certain circumstances to say nothing or to tell a lie. Are you one of those people?" he asked.

She deliberated a moment, and then, with her big eyes fixed on him, she said: "Yes, I do that."

Her small, work-worn and not beautifully shaped hands wrapped themselves tightly round each other.

"Well, that's an encouraging start," said Dr. Zeunemann. "Is it, if I may ask, your intention to pick and choose what you tell us is true?"

She shook her head, and gave a smile that covered her face in a trice.

"No, no," she said innocently, "I intend to answer your questions truthfully, to the best of my knowledge and ability. It goes without saying that the things you mentioned earlier apply here."

"That's very good," said the Presiding Judge. "I probably don't need to remind you of the serious consequences of

perjuring oneself. I only want to say that we short-sighted humans always do our utmost to regard each lie as the most abominable lie possible; we hold fast to the truth. What follows lies in the hands of God. Arguments or misapprehensions which are made out to be necessary lies ... those can be dangerous will-o'-the-wisps."

Fraulein Schwertfeger nodded gravely.

"Will you first of all tell us and the gentlemen of the jury in some detail what you know of how the late Frau Swieter's will came into being? Given that you and she had been friends from early youth she would have spoken with you about making the will; perhaps she asked you for advice on the matter?"

"O no," Fraulein Schwertfeger quickly replied, "she was forever saying: 'What do you think, Gundel? Shall I do it, Gundel?' But that was only her way of being polite and showing that were still close. She never asked for advice and would never have taken it."

"Then she never sought advice?" asked Presiding Judge. "But surely she would have indicated what had prompted her to make a will?"

"Yes, she did," answered Fraulein Schwertfeger.

"The deceased had been suffering from cancer for some eight years," said Dr. Zeunemann, "hadn't that induced her to speak much earlier about her last will and testament?"

"Never with me," Fraulein Schwertfeger stated, "and I don't believe it had. The doctors went to great lengths to keep the real nature of her illness from her, and she went along with it: in the first place because she was all-too easily fooled, and then because, in this case, she had the need to be misled. She wanted to live and to hope, and it did happen that after an operation she always felt completely healthy again."

"How, then," asked Dr. Zeunemann, "did she come finally to show interest in a will?"

"Well, that's obvious," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, "because there was a time when she was clearly failing and she felt it. It was a year ago when she had her terrible attack, after which she never left her bed again. She was very shaken, knowing that her health would not return. She didn't talk about it, but I often had the feeling that it was going through her mind."

When asked to describe in detail what happened in the end Fraulein Schwertfeger gave her account: "One afternoon when I was visiting her as usual, she greeted me by saying that that I had come at the right moment. She had just decided to make a will, and I must help her with it. If she became healthy once more, it would make no difference, but she really must consider the possibility that this time she would not recover; and anyway it was thoughtless of her, being the age she was, not to have done it before. It made no sense if her relatives got her money when they were almost total strangers and were rich besides. I told her she was a long way from

dying and that in my mind's eye I saw her fresh and strong and light-footed as before. She didn't answer me but I could see in her eyes what she was thinking, and she could read the same in mine."

"Was she flustered?" Dr. Zeunemann asked.

"No," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, showing heroic courage in her effort to swallow the tears that rose from her memory, "not especially, it was only at the start that her voice trembled a little. Then I said I didn't fancy having to deal with wills and things like that, all the more as it had to do with her. But she was quite right. If you possessed a fortune, then you had to make a will, and she should have done so ages ago. But then, what did she intend doing if her relatives weren't to have it. She soon found herself very much at a loss and went into a long preamble telling me that I would be astonished for sure and laugh at her and chide her, and then she finally told me that she wished to name Dr. Deruga as her heir."

"One moment, please," interrupted Dr. Zeunemann, "Your friend took it for granted that her decision would surprise you. Had she said anything previously about other plans? If you had been asked before then about what your friend was intending, would you have had no hunch or notion at all?"

"Yes, I would," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, "I had always believed that she would make an endowment for poor children in memory of her own child who had died, and because she loved children so very much. She used to say that miserable, badly nourished children were a disgrace to society. She went so far as to claim that every child she chanced to hear crying was being maltreated. Often, to reassure her, I would say: 'You know, it's nothing but some spoiled brat.' But deep down she didn't believe me. We had talked also about what could be provided for the benefit of poor children."

"Did you not remind her of it," Dr. Zeunemann asked, "or did she not think it was necessary for her to explain her change of mind?"

"She said she always had the suspicion about endowments that the money didn't get to those it was intended for at all."

Fraulein Schwertfeger broke off when she reached this point and was evidently uncertain as to whether she should add something or carry on.

"And had your friend never envisioned some way of avoiding this danger," asked the Presiding Judge encouragingly.

After struggling a little, the witness obviously gained courage and said: "She had intended leaving her fortune to me, so I could have a more comfortable life—my friend, you see, thought the life of a drawing teacher very arduous—and also because she knew that I would work for poor children in the way she wanted."

"I see!" said Dr. Zeunemann, "She had wanted to leave her fortune to you. It certainly is no small thing when a person changes their mind in such a matter. She must surely have explained why and given you her excuse?"

Fraulein Schwertfeger adopted a proud, defensive look: "She had no need to do any such thing," she said, "We were friends. All the same it did weigh on her and she wanted to explain to me at length why she was taking this action. She'd happened to hear that Dr. Deruga was not doing so well and that he was very down at heel, and that she couldn't stop herself thinking about him constantly. He was the

father of her beloved child and she had been very fond of him, and she still couldn't abandon the thought that what belonged to her was essentially his as well. In short, she wouldn't be able to die in peace if she didn't know that her fortune was protecting him from want. Of course, I didn't even let her finish, but comforted her and assured her that for me the money would only be an embarrassment because I'd think I'd have to spend it and wouldn't know how, and that I didn't want to arrange my life any differently because I was so used to it and I felt happy the way it was. The money would only remind me of losing her and I would get to hate it."

"It's odd, though," said the PJ, "that your friend didn't at least leave you a legacy as she did for her maid."

"At my request she refrained from leaving anything to me," said Fraulein Schwertfeger curtly.

Suddenly the Prosecutor stepped in, asking to speak. "It will only take a moment," he said. "Going by the witness's account I got the impression that her reported discussion which followed the drafting of the will took place immediately after her friend's last illness, making it sometime in March or April. However, the will that has been presented is dated 19 September, which is fourteen days prior to her friend's death."

Fraulein Schwertfeger made no reply but directed a long, hostile look at the questioner as if he were some incompetent meddler.

She then turned back to face the pj. who asked her kindly: "Fraulein, would you clarify that for us."

"My friend first wrote her will in the spring," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, "and on 19th September she re-wrote it."

"It remained unchanged, then?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"My friend increased the sum she'd left to her maid," replied Fraulein Schwertfeger.

"Presumably," said Dr. Zeunemann, "the maid had taken such good care of her during her serious illness that she wanted all the more to express her gratitude."

Looking warmly at him Fraulein Schwertfeger nodded her head.

"For that reason," she added, "and at my request, my legacy that was in the first draft was removed."

"If this carries on, before we know it, we'll be looking at a whole new will," commented the PP with a fiendish chuckle.

"You had no objection to the legacy initially," stated the Presiding Judge, "What was your reason for rejecting it now? It wasn't that something had come between you and your friend?"

"O no," Fraulein Schwertfeger protested vigorously, "I only gave way in the beginning so as to prevent her getting upset; but I decided there and then to cancel the legacy when the opportunity arose because it didn't suit me."

Then, drawn by the mocking, disbelieving smile on the Prosecutor's face she threw her head back in a small, defiant gesture and pressed her lips together.

Following a pause the Presiding Judge resumed his questioning by asking: "Afterwards--by that I mean after the first draft--did the deceased often return to the will?"

"No," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, "it wasn't a pleasant subject to either of us to talk about."

The Prosecutor laughed audibly, as if he wanted to say that there didn't appear to be one for her now, whereupon she cast a withering look towards where he was sitting.

"Did Frau Swieter never tell you or give you any indication," the Presiding Judge asked with kindly insistence, "whether there was any special cause or reason that presented itself which prompted her to make her will in favour of the accused? She spoke, you told us, of his being down-at-heel and that he had come down in the world. How did she come to hear that? Had his creditors turned to her, perhaps? Or was it that he himself had gone to see her about money?"

"That I don't know," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, "but I don't believe so, because she would have told me about it. That way she would have been much better able to explain her will to me. She'd known Dr. Deruga wasn't doing well; there are any number of ways by which such rumours would have found her."

"Did your friend speak to you, now and then, about the accused?" asked Dr. Zeunemann.

"No, almost never," replied Fraulein Schwertfeger, "She thought I didn't understand him."

"Then," put in the Prosecutor, "it's very likely that there was contact without you knowing it between your friend and her divorced husband."

Fraulein Schwertfeger threw her head back and scornfully curled her short upper lip.

"Of course it reflects nothing unfavourable on your friend," allowed the Presiding Judge, "After all, she could have kept things from you in order to avoid having to listen to your criticisms."

"It would have been possible," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, "but very unlikely. In any case there's no reason to make assumptions. She simply moved her fortune over to him because he was the father of her child and, according to her, because he had loved her. I remember her once saying that marriage to her was indissoluble if it had been bound and strengthened by children; and when anyone disagreed with her she said that perhaps it wasn't true for everybody but she had experienced it personally. My friend had a clinging nature, unsuited to being on her own, and perhaps unconsciously she'd formed this theory so that she'd feel still bound to someone, at least spiritually."

"As if I hadn't put more than enough stress on you already," said Dr. Zeunemann gently, "I'd like to ask you to explain how it was that you and Frau Seiter, being such close friends, differed so widely in your assessment of the accused."

Fraulein Schwertfeger gave a little laugh. "Why one person

loves another person is rarely understood by a third. Besides, one's more likely to forgive wrongs done to oneself; and friends are the ones least inclined to do that."

"Do I take it then," said the Presiding Judge, "that in your view the accused was to blame for the failure of the marriage?"

"He made her life a misery with his moodiness and his excesses," said Fraulein Schwertfeger with restraint.

"Despite that, and seeing that, at the time, Frau Swieter herself insisted on the divorce," said the Presiding Judge, "it seems that she continued to hang on to her divorced husband. Could you perhaps, as her friend, help us to understand this contradiction?"

Fraulein Schwertfeger thought for a moment and then said: "There are contradictions in every single person and more so in relations between two. While my friend was still married she once gave her husband a book for his birthday; and when he asked for a dedication she wrote on the first page: 'Deruga, you're just as handsome as you are amazing. One can't live without you nor with you'. It's an epigram Lessing coined for a certain Klothilde."

People in the hall laughed, but Dr. Zeunemann remained deadly serious. "I need to bother you with just one more question," he said. "Frau Swieter is said to have been unusually fearful. Her fear of her husband's hot-headed temperament is thought to have induced her to seek a divorce. Do you think she was still frightened of him even after the divorce?"

"O no, not of Deruga," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, "A few years ago she read in a newspaper that a man had lain in wait for his divorced wife and had stabbed her. With regard to that, she said, it happened often, and wives who wanted to separate from or had separated already, should somehow be protected. I said she shouldn't read the stupid newspapers, half of all that was in them was concocted. She laughed and asked if I was probably thinking that she was afraid. Then she told me that in the minor upsets which are unavoidable when you're living with someone: yes, Deruga's fiery temper flared, and he could be a bit vengeful, but it never lasted long and she was certain he never held a grudge against her. That's why I know for certain that she wasn't frightened of him in any way. Besides, she was a very fearful person in general and preferred, for example, to live on the third floor because she believed she was safer from burglars there. She was very afraid of death as well; though, on the other hand, she longed for the time when she would be reunited with her child."

"Presumably it wasn't death she feared but dying," said the Presiding Judge, "which she imagined would be agonising."

"Yes," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, "she had a great fear of pain and had a terrible amount to bear."

The Prosecutor asked if the invalid, as a result of the pain, had ever suffered from any disorders or any haziness of awareness.

"O no," said Fraulein Schwertfeger with a smile, and looking in Dr. Zeunemann's direction, "on the contrary, there were times when she complained she'd been in the greatest pain but her head always remained clear. She asked me once if I loved her enough to give her a poison that would release her from her suffering. I was shocked and told her I loved her too much to do that, I couldn't even think of it, let alone do it. I then reminded her of how she would be able to enjoy life again as soon as she was better, and that from what I knew of her she would likely become perfectly well again, and how soon her pain would be a thing of the past. She laughed and tried to comfort me by telling me I was quite right, in fact she hoped one day to be able to boast how bravely she had borne it. Be that as it may, there wasn't one moment when she didn't know exactly what she was doing."

"There is just one question remaining—the answer to which in a negative sense most definitely seems to me to be included in your previous statements—but I particularly need to ask: did Frau Swieter acquaint her divorced husband of the content of the will?"

"That I don't know," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, "I really don't think so. Why should she?"

"We'll leave that for the moment," said the Presiding Judge. "Assuming she'd wanted to tell him she would have had to write to him. Seeing that she no longer left her bed—let alone went outdoors—she would have had to have given the letter to someone or other to see to. Did she entrust it to you?"

"No," said Fraulein Schwertfeger.

"Had she at no time given you letters to post for her?"

"Maybe," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, "I don't remember; but if she did, there was never one for Dr. Deruga."

"He could perhaps have gone under a different name to mislead you?"

"O no," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, frowning, "she would have had to have arranged it with him beforehand. She would never have chosen to be underhand. I can vouch for that."

After a short pause the Presiding Judge said: "Fraulein Schwertfeger, I believe you. I am relying on your truthfulness. You are a teacher, the young are entrusted to your influence. You enjoy the love and reverence of your girl pupils as well as of the parents themselves, and you wouldn't want to conceal anything for the sake of some figment of your imagination. So then, you have not followed any wish of your friend and disclosed the content of her will, nor have you handled any letter of your friend that contained such disclosure or at all events could have contained it?"

"No," said Fraulein Schwertfeger.

"You are therefore convinced that the accused had no knowledge of the will?"

"I am convinced of it," she answered.

Dr.Zeunemann reflected for a moment before telling her that he wanted to bring her testimony to a close, anyway she would be tired. And in fact she did look very pale, enough to make her eyes appear almost black.

"O yes, I'm very tired. May I go?"

Dr.Zeunemann explained to her that, it being time for lunch, like all the others she was free to go, but that he must ask her to be present for the duration of the trial.

With a little nod she took her leave.

"A doughty old maid," said Councillor Fein to Deruga, "although she doesn't have the highest opinion of you"

"Poor, stupid goose," answered the latter brusquely. Sitting there propping up his head, his face covered, he straightened himself like someone who has been lost in the labyrinth of a sombre music that had suddenly broken off. The penetrating look, which he allowed to range through the room, came to rest by chance on Baroness Truschkowitz who, as it happened, was in the very process of getting to her feet and giving a sign with her eyes to her lawyer who was sitting a few seats away from her.

"An insufferable person," he said, "utterly suited to all the grubby things she stands for."

"Well, you know," retorted the Councillor, "the Baroness is loath to allow a fortune that she was counting on to be wrested from her grasp; she's only human, and she can all the more more readily be excused for thinking you capable of all kinds of villainy--because she doesn't know you."

"Do you call that an excuse?" asked Deruga sharply. "It's because she's greedy herself that she can't imagine others having different motives; so much for her knowledge of human nature. Disgusting!"

The woman in question had meanwhile got as far as the top of the outside steps of the courthouse and through her lorgnette was looking about her impatiently.

"I'm quite vexed," she told Dr.Bernburger, "at the line that was taken with that woman. For all I know she may well be a respectable woman. But it's clear she wasn't telling the truth. I fail to comprehend why they let it go on."

"Yes, madame, its a tricky matter. They abolished the rack a long time ago."

"Without doubt a rash move," said the Baroness. "Our ancestors were sharper than us in many respects, and they well knew what they were about. One must have the means of extracting the truth from people. Had I been the Presiding Judge I would have proceeded quite differently. But, Doctor, you seem to be preoccupied."

"On the contrary," said Dr.Bernburger, "I'm engrossed in our problem."

"And did you notice," the Baroness continued, "that she downrightly acknowledged what she plainly chose to deny,

simply that my cousin went in fear of her divorced husband. And how interesting that men have this tendency to murder their divorced wife. That's food for thought for a start."

The Baron who was standing beside her said indulgently: "I hope, little one, that it's not the only reason keeping you from getting a divorce."

She looked at him with a smile tinged with light mockery. "No, my dear, you're much too chivalrous for me to even think of being afraid of you." Immediately she waived to the waiting chauffeur to bring the car closer, and then dismissed her lawyer with a swift goodbye.

Leaving the courtroom, the Prosecutor tagged onto Dr. Zeunemann and gave vent to his complaints as he accompanied him to the Presiding Judge's office. It was clear, clear as daylight, he told him, that this model witness—meaning Fraulein Schwertfeger—had seen to the letter; she was a novice at lying. He wanted to be fair, but she had lied. Action must be taken! Or was it to be yet one more instance of a woman's partiality saving some wretch from jail? Here was a man who enjoyed the affections of women, and in life as in the salon, even in these days, men depend on women's favours. Doesn't a cry go up to heaven every time justice depends on a woman's caprice.

As he was speaking the Prosecutor wrung his hands and then ran them through the long thin hair that hung unkempt down the sides of his head.

"I'm telling you, as a colleague, to calm down," said Dr. Zeunemann disapprovingly, "your obsessive notion about women's favours doesn't ring true for Fraulein Schwertfeger. She obviously has an aversion to him."

"Words," shouted the Prosecutor despairingly. "Words, words! She's actually abetting him. She's probably written to him herself. Isn't it as clear as day?" he asked, turning to the two assessors, who acknowledged that Fraulein Schwertfeger's behaviour did seem striking to them, but it could also be put down to, for example, the timidity that women characteristically display when appearing before a large gathering.

"Oh God," moaned the Prosecutor, "what are we coming to if a shabby old specimen like that can dull the keen insight of experienced judges!"

"Dear colleague," said Dr. Zeunemann, looking at the clock, "you're in need as much as we are of some lunch and a bit of quiet. Have a quarter of an hour's catnap. And in future I beg you to only ask questions that you consider useful."

"What good does that do, asking questions, when one is fobbed off with lies?" said the Prosecutor bitterly. "I know now what I wanted to know, namely that it's exactly as I said it was at the beginning: it wasn't manslaughter, but premeditated murder. When he learned that she was leaving him her fortune he resolved to kill her before she changed her mind, say influenced by a relative, and altered her will."

"I can do no other than return to you your own insinuation," said Dr. Zeunemann, "and give you my opinion, which is that you are looking at things through a pair of Baroness Truschkowitz's glasses. If one compares her charms

with those of Fraulein Schwertfeger, I grant you your suspicion appears almost justified."

The Prosecutor, evidently flattered by the teasing, had to laugh, adding grouchily that a trial involving women would always degenerate into gossip, and everyone had to admit what he had seen for himself at the beginning that they were dealing with murder."

Yes, said Dr. Zeunemann, and he for his part would willingly testify that the Prosecutor was still in love with his first convictions, like a mother with her first child until the second one came along and replaced the former.

Part six

"Ursula Zuger, thirty-eight years of age, for fourteen years in the service of the late Frau Swieter," began the Presiding Judge.

Ursula Zuger looked round about her with a superior smile. You're bursting to gobble up all the details that only I can give you, her expression seemed to be saying; here's where the kill is, come and get your fill, tuck in.

"Having been with Frau Swieter for such a long time you must have been well acquainted with you must have been well-acquainted with her circumstances."

"I would say," replied Ursula, "that I know all there is to know about my mistress, from beginning to end; nobody could say otherwise."

"Did the deceased occasionally speak with you about the past, I mean the time when she was married to the accused?"

"Whew!" Ursula emitted, its whistling sound seeming to indicate that such had been the case any number of times. "In fact ever since the time when she fell ill, poor thing. I'd be sitting with her of an evening and it was always: 'Do you remember this and that, Ursula? Do you remember the business with the beggar?' Now that's going back to the early days when the doctor still had no patients and, of all things, we'd get every beggar in town calling, and there was this time when the doctor himself answered the door and we heard him say: 'Now, good friend, what do you expect me to give you? So, how much have you earned today? Come on now, tell the truth ... at least one mark? ... at least, you say! You go around on crutches, have only one eye-splendid, and we're talking one mark. Me? Nothing. In four weeks I've not earned ten marks. But if its a cigarette you're after and can afford me a little company-and with that he actually, with his own hand, rolled a cigarette for the man who looked as if he'd just been rummaging in a dustbin, though otherwise he was a cheeky, cheerful sort of feller, and he would come every few days and immediately I opened the door he'd say that he didn't need anything, he just wanted to keep the doctor company for a very wee while.

"I see," said the Presiding Judge, "so you were able to serve up happy memories for the invalid in order to cheer her up."

"Naturally," replied Ursula. "She'd been through enough pain and sorrow."

"If Frau Swieter bore no grudges against the doctor," continued the Presiding Judge, "and even liked to remind herself of him, did she, no doubt, now and again exchange letters with him? "

"I thought you'd bring that up again," said Ursula triumphantly, "and for once and for all the answer is no. Where would she have exchanged letters with her divorced husband? If they had, they could just as well have stayed together."

"There is a difference, though," interrupted the Presiding Judge, "It can happen that some people get along very well at a distance whereas they'd get in eachother's hair if they were continually under the same roof."

"My mistress was too much of a lady," said Ursula severely, "There was was no talk whatsoever, once they were apart, about getting in anyone's hair, nor of any secret whisperings. If ever I had occasion back then to tell her that basically the doctor had not, by any means, been a bad man, and that it was a proper shame if he'd now got on the wrong track, and for us too, because everything went well so long as he was there. My mistress would then shake her head and say: 'Even if we became reconciled today we'd part again before the year was out.' And she was right. A man like that couldn't stop, going on and on, not for once."

"Are you then of the opinion," asked the Presiding Judge, "that Frau Sieter neither wrote to the accused nor received letters from him?"

"Opinion!" repeated Ursula, her eyes flashing, "No need to be talking of opinion, Herr President, when it was something I knew. And I'm not getting carried away when I say that even the Good Lord can't know as much. In the first place I know the doctor's handwriting, and from the time she fell ill a year ago there hasn't been a single letter for her that didn't go through my hands; and she no longer wrote anything beyond what she dictated to me or to Fraulein Schwertfeger, but mostly to Fraulein Schwertfeger. And it was us who took her letters to the post office."

"Now, my dear," said Dr.Zeunemann, "your mistress wasn't lame, was she? If she had really wanted she could in fact have got out of bed, collected her writing things and written without you knowing; and she could have asked Dr. Kirchner, her doctor, for example, to take care of her letter."

"Yes, that's how it appears to you, Herr President," said Ursula forebearingly, "because you don't know better. But my mistress going behind my back and writing letters and getting them sent off—it's impossible. If you knew the circumstances, such a thing wouldn't have come into your mind. No, and even if she wasn't lame—and she certainly wasn't—she still wouldn't have kept anything from me when there was no reason to; all she would have needed to say was: 'Ursula, nobody has to know about this letter, and you don't know anything about it either.' As for giving a

letter to Dr.Kirchner to take with him, well, that's a laugh if you did but know it. She wouldn't know if he'd kept it half a year in his pocket, or whether he'd dropped it on the stairs. Anyway, why would she trust her secrets to people she really didn't know when she had Fraulein Schwertfeger and me to rely on. So you can put secret letters out of your head. What went on in our home, that I know about, and nothing could go on that I didn't know about."

"My good woman, there'll be times when you go out shopping," said the Presiding Judge, who wasn't ready yet to admit defeat, "were you also able to know what was happening in your apartment when you were not there?"

"Herr President, if you think you're taking me in, as the saying goes," answered Ursula coolly, "then, if you'll allow me to say, you've slipped up. Whenever I went out there was precious little that could have happened because, you see, I always locked the door behind me. My mistress herself ordered me to do it. She said: 'You know, Ursula, since I'm not supposed, according to what the doctor says, to get out of bed, the simplest thing is to lock the door behind you , that way I'll be sure no one can get in. If anyone does call they can ring the doorbell and come again. There's no chance of a fire starting while you're out-- though as far as that was concerned I had no qualms because how could there be when I always went out early in the morning, or in the afternoon when there was no fire in the house. Fraulein Schwertfeger had her own doorkey so that she could get in at any time. So,Herr President, you must now see that nothing could happen when I wasn't there."

"It's just that in your absence," rose the screeching voice of the Prosecutor, "your mistress was murdered."

Ursula was silent, though more dumbstruck, it seemed, by the audacity of the claim than by its value as evidence.

"We haven't got that far yet," she said at last, pulling herself together, "I don't believe for a minute that it was murder, because it's not possible for anything to have happened in the time I was out."

"Except if Frau Swieter herself wished it," interjected the Presiding Judge.

"Yes, but you yourself don't believe,Herr President," said Ursula, retrieving her earlier line of thought, "that this fatally ill woman got out of bed and actually went down three flights of stairs to send to our doctor over there a letter that I could have seen to in a jiffy and with the greatest pleasure."

Dr. Zeunemann sighed. "You've never travelled anywhere," he resumed, "since Fraulein Swieter fell ill last year and was confined to her bed?"

"No," said Ursula, "although she often offered it to me, and I also knew that Fraulein Schwertfeger would have been happy to stay with her while I was gone, and that she could also have hired a nurse. But a nurse wouldn't understand the situation as I do, and even if I regretted not seeing my mother for ages, I told myself that my mistress hadn't abandoned me in nineteen years, and I wasn't going to abandon her either. Back home I wouldn't have had any peace and I believe I would find no peace in my grave if I'd left this poor, sick worm on her own."

Ursula's loud voice was becoming unsteady, and she ran a handkerchief over her face.

The Presiding Judge waited a short while before inviting her to describe, as far as her memory allowed, from beginning to end what happened the day Frau Swieter died.

"That day of all days," she began, "I wasn't expecting anything bad. It had been an awful night. I could hear her groaning. I must have gone five times to her and asked whether or not I should fetch the doctor, but she said: 'No, he'll be no help to me', and sent me away because I only made it worse for her, because when I was there, she said, she had to control herself.

It was getting on for morning before I actually got to sleep. I heard four o'clock strike, but not five, then at seven o'clock I was wakened by the chimney sweep ringing the bell. His loud ring made me furious and I hurried to the door and told him it was no way to carry on, showing up without any warning: he was supposed to let us know the day before that he was coming, and I wasn't going to let him in and that was that; and in fact I couldn't stand the cocky devil anyway. I thought my mistress was likely to have dropped off to sleep a short while ago and now she'd be awake again, and the next thing was she rang for me and asked me who was outside. The chimney sweep, I told her, and that I'd told him off and sent him away. She laughed at that and said it didn't matter, she'd soon get off to sleep again and she was feeling quite well now. I have to admit she looked and acted as if she had a fever but there was something peaceful about her and when I looked in again at ten o'clock she was lying there completely still, and her hair had fallen half across her face. I quietly left the room and hurried as quickly as I could and when I returned I peeped in again and there she lay, her eyes open, and she gave me such a peaceful smile and said: 'There you are, Ursula. I'm much better. I no longer have any pain.' And she really did look quite well, although there were deep shadows under her eyes like broad, black bands. Watching her closely there did seem to be something odd: 'Ma'am, you're looking so mysterious' In my heart of hearts I didn't think the mystery was death, otherwise I wouldn't have told her."

"How did she answer?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"She smiled more happily than before and said: 'The mystery is that our Mingo visited me. Mingo is the name of our child who died and we called her Mingo because we'd counted on having a baby boy.' "

"She'd dreamt of her dead child," said the Presiding Judge. "Did she say any more about it?"

"Of course," said Ursula, "whenever she'd dreamt of their dead child she'd talk of it the whole day long. The child had appeared in an open carriage drawn by beautiful, black horses and was seated on the back seat as it had sat before between its parents. It had sat there proud and straight and waved its little hand, beckoning her to sit at its side; and then suddenly it wasn't a carriage any more but a kind of carousel or swing that flew, to the sound of lovely music, higher and higher. Then it seemed to her as if the swing had torn away and when she became frightened her Mingo would say to her earnestly: 'Just hold on to me!' It

made her laugh, the thought of that tiny creature wanting to be a support for its mother; and then she'd wake up.

"In between my cooking I kept on going into her room and chatting with her about Mingo, and then I brought her her lunch and sat beside her and talked to her about eating properly, because, you see, all she did was to take sips.

"'O, Ursula,' she said, 'just let me be, I'm not hungry today. Our beggar is sure to call and he'll be glad if he gets that much more.' True, it was Thursday and on a Thursday, more often than not, an old man would turn up and tell me that there was no better cook in the whole street; we were always joking with each other. The moment she spoke, the doorbell sounded; and it wasn't our beggar but someone else, a Slovak by the look of him, selling mousetraps. I'd no sooner opened the door before my mistress rang her bell—and so loudly it went straight through me—and as I rushed into her room she asked if it was her doctor. 'Heavens above,' I said, 'Your doctor doesn't come at this hour; it's a beggar.' 'That's fine,' she said, 'I just wanted to tell you not to let the doctor in today. I'm too weary to have him torturing me. You can tell him I had a bad night and that I was sleeping.'"

"Didn't that puzzle you?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"No," said Ursula in amazement, "nothing out of the ordinary in that. There were times when I'd use some excuse or other if I had to send the doctor away, for example if I was reading something exciting to her."

"Did you also read to her on that day?" asked the Presiding Judge.

Ursula shook her head sadly. "We never got round to it," she said. "After I'd finished in the kitchen, I asked her, as I did every day, if I should read to her or whether she'd like Fraulein Schwertfeger to come. 'No,' she said, 'Gundel is sure to come anyway, when she has time, and I think I'll get some more sleep. You can go to the bank and then pay the rent, as you didn't manage it yesterday—that was the second of October—and on your way back you can bring me a bottle of Greek wine, I do enjoy it so and the doctor says I can have wine.' Then she gave me instructions to tell the caretaker to turn the heating on in the evening so that I wasn't sitting in the cold, because the wind blew with such force against the window. Actually, he should have already put the heating on the first of the month but the fellow was so lazy he'd not done a proper job of sweeping up the dead leaves in the front garden, and he wasn't moved to go down into the basement and turn the heat on. If you reminded him about something he was always ready with an excuse for not having done it yet. He'd rather stoke the fires of Hell than be the caretaker of three houses and eighteen apartments, each of which wanted a different temperature—that was one of his favourite sayings. I told my mistress that I'd sooner freeze than have anything to do with that mealy worm of a caretaker. She laughed and said what I should do was to get him to imagine how dangerous it was, how cold and angry I was because of him. And those were the last words I heard her say."

"When you got back to the apartment she was dead," said the Presiding Judge. "You had locked the door and you discovered that it was still locked?"

"The door wasn't locked and that had come about because shortly before I arrived Fraulein Schwertfeger had been and she wasn't in the habit of locking it again."

Fraulein Schwertfeger was asked if she'd found the door locked and declared that she hadn't paid any attention to it and therefore couldn't say. She'd been on her way to evening school and would have been in a hurry; she'd just wanted to know how things were going. It had been deathly quiet in the apartment, she'd assumed her friend was sleeping, had taken a peep into the bedroom, and then gone on her way. The door leading from her friend's bedroom into the living room was wide open as normal. When she left she most definitely did not lock the front door, and she never had done. It would have been about five minutes to six.

"What time was it when you returned?" said Presiding Judge, turning again to Ursula.

"As I was coming round the corner into our street," said Ursula, "I heard the castle church strike six, so I was less than five minutes away especially since I was walking quickly. You see I'd been delayed. I'd had to wait at the bank, and I'd had to go for the wine. When I did get back I went first into the kitchen and put my shopping down—I'd bought a few other household things as well—and finally took my coat off. Then I went quietly into the bedroom. I took it for granted that my mistress was sleeping, otherwise she'd have called me immediately I opened the front door. 'Is it you?' she'd have called in her soft voice. She had such a high innocent voice, like a child's. Through the open door I saw how still she was, lying there, her head to one side and her arms on top of the cover, and I straightaway turned about, glad that she was having such a good sleep. But when I was in the living room all at once it came to me: she was lying in quite a different way from how she usually lay, I mean she never lay flat on her back but more turned onto her side with one hand under her face. It suddenly dawned on me and I felt so peculiar, truly my knees were shaking and I had to pluck up courage to go back into the bedroom. And as I gently, very gently drew her hair back from her face I could see she was dead, because no living person could lie so still."

"Did she always wear her hair loose?" inquired Dr. Zeunemann.

"O no," answered Ursula with a short disdainful smile. "I did her hair every morning and had it looking very beautiful and neat, not a hair out of place, but during the previous night with all the tossing and turning on account of the pain it had come undone, but because she was so weary I hadn't wanted to bother her with it."

"We know from the doctor, whom the maid had immediately sent for," said the Presiding Judge, "that death had occurred one to two hours earlier and had actually resulted, as the doctor presumed at the time, from weakness of the heart. The condition of the patient left no one in any doubt any doubt whatsoever of the cause given, which is why no suspicions arose in any quarter."

"In connection with this, would you run through, one more time, Fraulein Zuger, the persons who had been in the apartment in the course of the day!"

"Not a single person set foot inside the apartment," said Ursula with emphatic disapproval. "The first to ring the doorbell was the chimney sweep, very early in the morning. I sent him away, then he came back one more time--pushy individual he was--and I told him that in a well-run household stoves weren't cleaned beyond ten o'clock. He should make a note of it. After him came the postman, he normally just pushed the letters through the flap, but this time he rang the doorbell because one of the envelopes had more postage to pay."

"What sort of letter was it?" asked the Presiding Judge hastily.

"The letter was for me," answered Ursula, pertly triumphant, "from a woman friend who'd taken a position in France."

"And any more?" asked Dr. Zeunemann.

"Next the vegetable woman rang the bell. I didn't take anything because her spinach last time had gone bitter. And then at midday the Slovak. Apart from all those, nobody; and certainly in the apartment no one at all."

The Prosecutor asked to speak.

"I would like to make the point that the apartment was not as heavily fortified as the good woman would like to depict. She herself has told us that when she opened the door to the so-called Slovak, she was summoned by Frau Swieter's bell. The man could have seized the opportunity and stepped inside."

Ursula turned herself completely round to face her tall, skinny attacker, and stood, eyes flashing, hands on hips, running her rule over him from top to toe.

"Could he now?" she asked scornfully. "He could if I hadn't slammed the door in his face. I banged it shut before I ran to my mistress, and it had stayed shut, as I saw when I returned. I could still hear the Slovak on the bottom step outside. I'd given him a bowl of soup but he hadn't touched it. Soup is not what these vagabonds are generally after. By the way he was a completely harmless fellow and certainly didn't look ragged and dirty like real rogues are."

"Are you quite definite," asked the Presiding Judge, "that you would have recognised the accused in any sort of disguise?"

"It took Ursula a few moments to grasp the import of this question.

"You mean Dr. Deruga?" she finally asked, her eyes growing ever larger. "You mean if our Dr. D. could have been the Slovak? Look, Herr President, you might just as well have asked me if you could be Dr. D. For goodness sake! And did he give me a wink and say: 'Ursula, don't you recognise me, stupid? Not at all! But you're thinking something like that, because you weren't acquainted with the situation!'"

With a sigh and a gesture of despair Dr. Zeunemann cut the accelerating flow of words. "Let's keep to the matter in hand," he said. "You think it impossible for anyone to get into the living room?"

"Out of the question, simply out of the question," Ursula answered.

"Except if Frau Swieter herself wanted them to," said Dr. Zeunemann.

"O yes, I can just see her letting in robbers and murderers," said Ursula with angry contempt.

"Patently obvious robbers and murderers, no," the Prosecutor interposed loudly, "but maybe her former husband, for whom she still had, alas, as the will proves, a loving interest."

"And after seventeen years," said Ursula almost shouting, "would still know it was him by the way he rang the bell?"

"If she was expecting him, it wasn't necessary," said the Prosecutor in the acid tone of a malicious fiend.

Dr. Zeunemann signalled a warning at Ursula who looked as if she were ready to fly at her opponent's throat.

"I believe," he began, "that we're starting to go round in circles. The Prosecutor is assuming that there existed some kind of communication between the divorced pair, which is still entirely unproven; indeed, it is more the case of its impossibility being proven. In my opinion the witness has nothing useful to offer, and we could move on to questioning the caretaker, if my honorable colleagues and gentlemen of the jury are agreed."

With her head stiffly erect and a scornful smile on her lips for the benefit of the caretaker who had been announced, she proceeded to her seat next to Fraulein Schwertfeger.

In the flesh the caretaker bore not the slightest resemblance to a mealy worm as he had a red face with a tinge of blue about his nose. He strolled across with the easy gait of one too much a connoisseur ever to be hurried, casting a leisurely look around him, and finally surveying all the objects pertinent to the examination that had gathered on the long green table before which he now stood.

The Presiding Judge swore him in and required him not only to answer truthfully the questions put to him, but to do so without being ambiguous or long-winded.

"Surely," said the caretaker. "Not a problem."

"Where can you usually be found?" was the first question.

"Well," said the caretaker with a laugh, "it's not as simple as A,B,C. It all depends, you see, on what I'm doing right there and then. But if I say I'm in one of my three houses because there's something needs fixing in one of the apartments, or because one of the tenants wants to have a word with me about this or that, or I'm in the basement seeing to the heating, or in the garden where I like wander round, that'd be about right. My own apartment is where I am least as there's nothing at all for me to do there. My family doesn't interest me as much as my job does."

"Are the houses kept locked during the daytime?" asked the Presiding Judge

"God forbid," said the caretaker. "No, everyone can go in or out as they please. And there's never any bother; and, in any case, each apartment has its own door as well. No, there's no question of us locking up in the daytime. Of a morning at six I go and unlock the main house doors—or

rather my wife does—and of an evening at nine I lock them, and that routine has always served us well.”

“And the basements remain locked, do they?”

“Well, you see, Herr President,” answered the caretaker, “it's not as simple as A,B,C. At night time they probably should be locked really, but in the daytime it simply wouldn't work, partly on account of the heating and partly because maids so often have to go down to fetch coal and potatoes and suchlike from there. It would mean forever unlocking and relocking.

All day long I get: 'O, caretaker, do help me. Caretaker, please, just a minute of your time' I'm supposed to be in a hundred places at once. No, it's best all round if the basements are open all the time; and no one has ever objected.”

“But you yourself,” the Presiding Judge reminded him, “once caught a man who had sneaked in.”

“I did?” reflected the caretaker, “Ah yes, Ursula probably told you about it, did she?” he exclaimed amusedly. There was a pause. “Yes, but no one had any cause to be afraid. He was obviously harmless. He looked so green in the face, as if he'd been eating unripe apples all night. He was homeless for sure, or maybe one of the maids had hidden him there, because all the spinsters have a boyfriend even though they act so prissy.”

Dr. Zeunemann's face took on a serious look and he asked in a stern voice: “Do you recall who went in and out on October second last year?”

“Good heavens,” sighed the caretaker, “how am I supposed to remember all the daily comings and goings! Imagine: three houses, Herr President, making it eighteen apartments and that's not including my own: four apartments in one of the houses, and in each of the other two, seven. And then come October it all goes completely haywire when you have some tenants moving out and others moving in, as well as all the tradesmen involved!”

“Exactly because they were special days,” persisted the Presiding Judge, “they're probably still in your memory. Also the sudden death of Frau Swieter, who lived in the house furthest from you will have made that day stand out. Later, when you came to hear of the suspicion and you turned it over in your mind, surely you searched your memory for who you saw going in and out that day.”

“I'll do what I can to please you, Herr President,” said the caretaker. “The chimney sweep who was there very early very likely doesn't interest you, nor the postman either, and no tradesmen went to Frau Swieter's apartment because there were no removals taking place in that house. No shortage of beggars, though; and as far as that was concerned you could blame Frau Swieter for it. The other apartments had complained that she encouraged them because she always gave them something. Mind you, she was always straight with me and paid me for every little thing; she wasn't one of those who take people like me for granted. It was up to her how she treated the beggars. Anyway it's their turn now to do something for her.”

"Think carefully," said the Presiding Judge, "whether you saw a beggar between four and six in the afternoon, one who was unknown to you, one who caught your eye."

"Between four and six o'clock?" The caretaker delved deeply into his thoughts. "I sent my young feller to fetch me a litre of beer from the bar at the corner, and I waited at the garden gate until he got back, and then I set the mug of beer down on the step so I could have a sup now and then. Meantime the Councillor's wife from the ground floor of the second house came to tell me off for not having, as she thought, turned on the heating and I said to her: 'Frau Councillor—in this beautiful weather! We've not had weather like this all summer long and that whiff of wind that's not to your liking is the south wind itself ...' and so on until she maybe saw it was as I said, and went on her way. Ah yes, a man came who could have been bringing something, a hat or a mantilla, probably for the guest house where some fashion-mad woman was staying at the time. And then there was that funny one who didn't see me at first and aimed to go past me as if I was a lamp post, and I deliberately stood my ground, because I wanted to see if he bumped into me. Then suddenly he steps right in front of me and says: 'Got a light, Your Grace?' and held out a cigarette. I had to laugh and I got out my Swedish lighter and gave him a light. By way of thanks he gave me a little nod and a tug of his cap. No beggar that one. He had all kinds of things for sale, spoons and whisks which dangled from a length cord he was holding. No sooner had he gone out of the gate when he chucked the cigarette into the lilac bushes by the main gate. Whether it had gone out or else didn't taste right, I've no idea and I was on the point of picking it up, but then I thought: ah, leave it where it is, it can't be a good one."

"Are you able to give an accurate and reliable description of this man?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"No, Herr President," said the caretaker, smiling and shaking his head as if to say he was too smart to fall into that trap. "As much as I'd like to please you it's something I don't fancy tackling. I'd say though that he had rather long black hair and he came strolling along, sort of daydreaming like. If you were to stand him right in front of me, I would be almost sure of recognising him. But as to whether his jacket was grey or green or brown, and what sort of boots he had and whether he had holes in his socks and stuff like that, I couldn't really say."

"Did you give no thought at all as to what sort of man he might be?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"Well, I could see he was selling spoons," said the caretaker, "so there was nothing to think about. It would take up too much of my time if I chose to worry about every single hawker. You need only picture the kinds the kinds of people coming and going here. In the third house on the second floor, for example, there's Herr Rubsamen who composes music and writes about it. He's really bad with his nerves and if I hadn't been so patient with him he would have moved out long ago. You've only to see the type of people who visit him—you'd then be passed being scandalised by folk for ever. You get gents and ladies coming to sing for him or play for him—you'd think they were from a real gypsy band but it turns out they're artists and proper nice people. That was the day, by the

way, when the pianotuner arrived, but he sent him away because he'd got to know from Ursula, the maid, that her mistress had had a bad night and should be getting some sleep. Really goodnatureed is Herr Rubsamen. The piano tuner, though, he wasn't the man with the cigarette because the piano-tuner has a red face and blonde hair. I know him because he comes to Herr Rubsamen's every quarter."

"Then the man with the cigarette came out of the third house?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"He could also have come out of the second house that's run as a guest house," said the caretaker. "I didn't see him until he neared the front where I was standing."

"I would like to ask the caretaker if the accused resembles the man with the cigarette," said the Prosecutor, extending his arm in an imperious manner.

Dr.Zeunemann addressed the caretaker firmly: "Would you look at the accused!"

The caretaker turned slowly round to contemplate Deruga, who, attentive and astonished, appeared to find the examination entertaining.

"I'm stumped, Herr President," he said finally. "I'd like to swear that I've never seen the man before."

"You have to imagine him with a black wig and a false beard," said the Presiding Judge.

"Impossible!" shouted the caretaker with particular determination. "If I start imagining things like that, I'll end up not being able to tell one bloke from another and then I'll be for it on account of what I've imagined, and before I know it, I'll have got myself lumbered with a perjury charge. You see, Herr President, if you start thinking about how one feller looked and compare him with someone else, pretty soon everything'll seem possible and it'll all come down to imagination."

"Then you have no accurate picture in your memory," said the the Presiding Judge, "of the man who asked you for a light. Can you bring to mind any other individuals who had business on your premises on the second of October last between the hours of four and six?"

"Yes," answered the caretaker. "I'd just told my young'un to take the empty mug back to the bar and was watching him cross the street, when there was this shout coming from behind me, asking where the nearest taxi-cab stand was. He was in such a tearing hurry he could hardly wait till I'd given him proper instructions; he gave me a little prod on my side and ran on past. Straight after that my wife bawled out that the main drain in the guest house in the second house was blocked again—you see, they're always sticking their bones and combed out hair down it as if it were the rubbish bin—well, after I'd seen to that and was coming back into the garden, I caught sight of the doctor going into the third house on account of Frau Swieter who had died in the meantime."

"What kind of impression did the man give you" asked the Presiding Judge, "—the one who was in such a hurry?"

"I know for sure," said the caretaker, "that he was wearing a long, wide coat; that was because I was thinking about nowadays fashion: women wear men's jackets and men wear

women's stuff. From behind he looked like a muffled up female, but otherwise he was a decent sort."

The Prosecutor asked to be allowed to return once more to the man with the cigarette. He wished to know if he spoke pure German or spoke like a foreigner.

"You must know," said the caretaker, "there's very few people talk the way we do. Many's the time I've thought, what sort of gibberish is that they're talking. Turns out it was German, nothing else. 'Got a light, Your Grace ?' He ran through the sentence again as if he were to recalling the sound of the words and the tone of the voice. It sounded a wee bit odd but pleasant enough in a funny sort of way. On the other hand the man wanting a taxi was so out of breath I could scarcely make out what he was saying; nor could he understand me either, seeing as how he took off in the wrong direction even though I'd given him clear directions how to get there. Mind you, it could have been because he was in such a mad rush."

"The latter gentleman," said the the Presiding Judge, "is probably the selfsame one who inquired about a room in the guest house and had to be turned away. Not a trace of him has been found and we assume he made only brief stop there."

By the close of the session all those present, with the exception of Deruga, were tired, irritable, and keyed up. Herr von Wydenbruck's thoughts lingered in his mental vision of the deceased woman as Ursula had described it, and this he conveyed to Dr. Bernburger as he walked beside him along the wide corridors of the justice building.

"The child," he said abruptly, "who visited her, was, of course, a representation of the father; the swinging back and forth can be understood as sensual movement. There's no doubt she was expecting him."

Dr. Bernburger, looking very wan, had just lit himself a cigar and was beginning to relax.

"That's true," he hastened to say. "The eventual meeting from opposite directions like drills in a tunnel. He has asked her for money and that had revived memories. She was awaiting him in an amorous or sentimental mood. He came as a hawker selling wooden spoons. Either he made Ursula privy to the secret, or else he knew how to escape her eagle eye, or Frau Swieter let him in herself. If I'd known the result of the preliminary examination, and if I'd been able to ask questions, I would have brought out the salient facts of the case on the spot. It was torture for me witnessing this lumbering machine at work."

His thin fingers trembling, Dr. Bernburger wiped his hands with his handkerchief.

"Is it your belief, then," asked Dr. von Wydenbrucks, "that the desire to meet again came from Deruga and money worries were at the bottom of it?"

"I considered it likely," said Dr. Bernburger. "In any case it was the Slovak who killed her, and that Slovak was Deruga."

"In my opinion," said Dr. von Wydenbruck, "magnetic attraction was the root cause that drew the two hysterics fatefully together. Whatever the disguise the desire may have adopted magnetic attraction had to be the core."

"Is it possible that the discarded cigarette is still lying in the bushes?" asked Bernburger, following his own thoughts. "But then goodness knows how much rain and snow has fallen on it already."

"Why couldn't it have been the taxi man?" offered Dr.von Wydenbruck. "He was obviously in a hurry. The other one asked for a light so as to appear nonchalant and immediately afterwards threw the cigarette away because he had no intention of smoking it. Besides, most smokers carry matches with them. And it's also the feeling I got when the maid first mentioned the Slovak. I saw it with my second sight."

With renewed interest von Wydenbruck took a sideways look at his friend. "That would most certainly decide things," he said, and inquired as to whether his friend had often experienced such manifestations.

Ahead in the same corridor, in a window niche, Deruga was engaged in conversation with Councillor Fein. He cast a casual glance at the pair about to pass by. "If I were the Presiding Judge," Deruga said, "I'd take a loaded revolver with me into the sittings and I'd hold it up to the witness's face and if they still couldn't decide to give a sensible answer I'd shoot them dead. The man's patience is beyond all understanding."

Dr.Bernburger and his companion were at that moment almost drawn level with him. Quick as a flash he took a cigarette out of his cigarette-case, went forward a couple of steps and said to Dr.Bernburger: "Got a light, Your Grace?" Then, after he'd lit his cigarette, he stepped back again beside the Councillor, giving him a wink from his deadpan face.

Dr.Bernburger had gone pale with fury and didn't utter a word as he proffered the burning end of his cigar. He's obviously making fun of me, he thought. How much insight, presence of mind, impudence, and cool-headedness this man commands; I wouldn't put anything past him. Mind you, if he weren't guilty his behaviour would simply go to show the confidence of someone entirely blameless; however, what he is displaying is the confidence of the shrewd, cynical perpetrator; it was the challenge of an intellectual criminal who believed his guilt could never be proven.

Dr.Bernburger was too agitated, too engrossed in his thoughts to utter them aloud. He walked briskly just a few steps ahead of his friend.

"He guessed your thoughts," said the latter. "That again is a symptom of hysteria, as is cold-bloodedness. In the end they'll have to recognise that what they're dealing with here is something diseased, a form of sex murder."

"But the woman he killed was fifty-two years old!" said Dr. Bernburger angrily.

"Precisely, that's the perversity of it," said Dr.von Wydenbruck, "It's perhaps because of that she also, to him, merged with a visual memory he had of his mother, which, as a result of passion and the desire to annihilate, disastrously reinforced their shared tendency."

Meanwhile Councillor Fein was scolding his client: "You really are a barrel load of monkeys. I need to padlock that mouth of yours. What was that sudden burst about?"

"Ah," said Deruga, "why can't I throw that pair of young sharks a bone to get their crooked teeth into? Didn't you see his eyes nearly popping out of his head with greed. I'm only sorry I can't watch them gnawing it."

"Sharks are no joking matter," said the Councillor, "and although you're a good-for-nothing Italian, I'd rather not see him get you between his teeth."

Part seven

The Baroness had scarcely left the courtroom on her husband's arm when a court usher stepped in front of her and in the name of High Court Judge Zeunemann requested her to call on him in his chamber for a short discussion. The usher added that he was ready to take them there immediately.

"You'll come with me, won't you," she asked her husband, who said he was happy to do so, though he had to confess that he was hungry; but then the lawyers too would be in the same boat, so it wouldn't last long.

The Presiding Judge ..., she said, breaking into French, was a very pleasant man, somewhat vain in a petty bourgeois kind of way, but obliging, and at heart, she believed, wholly on her side.

Dr. Zeunemann had already changed and was refreshing himself by nibbling at a piece of chocolate.

"Baron, Baroness, I wouldn't have detained you right now," he announced, offering them chairs, "if it were not in your own interests: my wish being, if not to spare you, at least to moderate for you a frightful shock or unpleasant surprise."

"A frightful shock, Judge!" the Baroness exclaimed, "now when my nerves are already in shreds on account of this abominable trial. No, you couldn't be so cruel!"

"I'm hoping I might be able to lessen the unpleasantness," said Dr. Zeunemann, "by preparing you myself. This morning I received a letter from your daughter in which she writes that she has learned of the trial from her newspaper. She's quite beside herself. She objects to it and demands that her objection be made public.

"But you won't do that, Herr President...", cried the Baroness, her face flushing. "She can object in private as much as she wants, but it's none of anyone else's business. As if the trial weren't enough of a scandal already!"

"Perhaps what's caused your daughter to be against it," Dr. Zeunemann suggested, "is that you are giving it your attention?"

"But, my dear Judge, explained the Baroness, "You can't expect me to pay any heed to the idle protestations of a young girl, a child, whenever important decisions are called for. Is that what you would do?"

"If I were in your place now," said Dr. Zeunemann, "I would at least try to prevent your daughter playing to the gallery. She seems greatly agitated and outraged and is so, actually, in part, because you, honourable lady, maintained that it was in her interests that you were holding out for a trial."

"O, the ingratitude of one's children," sighed the Baroness. "All those horrific, scandalous things-- if only I had taken them upon myself, if only I hadn't regarded it as my duty to secure the material advantages that are due to my daughter. Why don't you say something, Botho?" she asked, turning to her husband, "I'm hoping you'll bring your authority to bear on Mingo."

"I will try," replied the Baron, "to keep her from doing or saying anything that's out of order. Incidentally you well know, dear child, influencing Mingo is not easily done."

"Very easy, in fact," retorted the Baroness looking down her nose. "If you want to make an impression on her, you first must understand her."

"She's probably far too used to us," observed the Baron calmly, "as well as being far too spoiled by us."

"By you!" commented his wife. "Thank God she's too far away to give us real trouble."

"The letter I received today," said Dr. Zeunemann, "bore the postmark Ostend."

"Ostend!" cried the Baroness, standing up from her chair, "She's left England without asking our permission. You can't let that pass, Botho!"

"Her intention is to come here," continued Dr. Zeunemann.

"I'm grateful to you, Judge," said the Baron, also getting to his feet, "for warning us in such a considerate manner. We won't take up your precious time one moment longer!"

The Baroness too expressed her thanks in a gracious manner, coupling them with the request that he wouldn't let any of her daughter's baroque notions become known.

In the large entrance hall on the ground floor a mass of people was still trying to press its way forward, with the result that the couple were unable to progress as quickly as they wished.

Half exasperated by her husband's failure by hook or by crook to carve a way through for her, the Baroness found herself stationary, when suddenly something made her turn her head to the side, and quite close to her she saw the face of a man who, so it seemed, was observing her with piercing contempt. As she turned away angrily, she caught sight of a remarkable pin in the man's cravat, and instantly it was clear to her that the man was Deruga. Feelings of weakness and nausea overcame her.

"Why aren't we moving?" she said fiercely to her husband, shoving him forward by his arm.

He noticed her edginess, redoubled his efforts to force his way through the throng, and within a few minutes brought her to the waiting car. Looking exhausted she flung herself into a corner of the back seat.

"Did you see Deruga?" she asked when her husband voiced his concern for her. "Did you see how brazenly he stared at me?"

It beggars belief that that man is allowed to walk about freely. I had no idea he was so horrible."

"But today's not the first time you've seen him," said the Baron, puzzled.

"I can't recognise anyone without my glasses," she said. "You know that. I can't think how I'm going to get over the look he gave me. Isn't it outrageous that I'm left without any protection, yet at the mercy of that man's vengeance. For the rest of my life I won't feel safe, not for one second."

As far as that was concerned, the Baron reckoned, she need have no worry: accused people and suspects were always wary.

"And certain people always believe what's most convenient," she added.

She would be able to think more calmly when she'd eaten, the Baron predicted indulgently. She was over-hungry, overtired, weakened by the stuffy air of the courtroom. And on top of all that there was the effect of Mingo's bombshell. She should take a rest in the afternoon instead of being boxed up in that stifling courtroom for hours on end and exposing herself to disgusting and disturbing impressions. He was prepared to go himself and give her a detailed report; anyway, the next testimonies would yield nothing new.

And that turned out to be the case. Frau von Liebenburg, proprietress of the guest-house in the second house, declared with high disdain that hers was an exclusive clientele, that nothing untoward had ever taken place among her guests, and that she was unable to make any statement in connection with the trial. Naturally she couldn't assume responsibility for every one who inquired after her rooms, and couldn't keep account of those who came by; and she refused outright to make any statements regarding the ladies and gentlemen who were regular guests. She made an urgent request for her present residents not to be incommoded with pointless questions and investigations.

Following this fine, sensitive lady came Frau Rubsamen, wife of the composer and musicologist from the second floor of the third house, and made apologies for the absence of her husband who was ailing and altogether far too nervous to appear as a witness since even the idea of being caught up in a trial like this set him back healthwise. It was just that he had an artistic temperament and you can't deal with him as you would an ordinary person. There wasn't a thing he could do about it because his memory was weak and he got into a nervous state whenever he tried hard to remember things.

She, though, well recalled the second of October because it was when Ursula asked her in the morning if she could possibly give a little thought to Frau Swieter who had had such a bad night and was hoping to get a bit of sleep during the day. Naturally, she and her husband would be happy to oblige. But then Frau Swieter had been a pleasant resident and Herr Rubsamen had always said that he couldn't hold her in greater esteem, on account of the fact that she didn't play her piano and didn't practise on any other instrument; the only thing he found distressing was her illness. Herr Rubsamen, you see, couldn't bear the thought

of anyone dead or dying being in the house. As it was he had the family in the apartment above all doing gymnastics morning and evening, and almost every day he said he'd be only too glad to consider poor Frau Swieter, if only he didn't have the gymnasts over his head. She herself had done her bit and sent the piano-tuner away. Anyway it was that time after lunch when her husband was used to having some quiet.

An hour later this man came. He hadn't seemed to her to be a real gentleman. He asked if Herr Rubsamen might give him a voice test and let him know if it would be worth his while to have it trained. She'd shown him into the living-room and then gone to tell her husband who'd asked what kind of man he was, and she'd said maybe a coachman or at best a paper-hanger. You see, they were the sort of persons who often heard about some poor devil or other who had made his fortune through having a beautiful voice; and so, if they could bellow really loudly, enough to make the walls tremble, they got it into their heads that they were born artists.

Well, from what she told her husband, he lost interest completely; anyway, testing voices was a thankless task, and when you tried to talk people out of it, they were often rude, and for a nervous man like Herr Rübnsamen it was poison.

As it was up to her in cases like that to talk nicely to whoever it was so that they left, she had told the man that her husband wasn't at home, so he might like to come back some other time. And, she had to say, he'd never turned up again.

Had she asked the gentleman his name, Dr. Zeunemann enquired.

"No, no," said Frau Rübnsamen, "I wanted to be involved as little as possible. Now, a couple of years later he probably goes by the name of Mirabilio or Birbanti."

"This isn't getting us anywhere," said Dr. Zeunemann to his neighbour who was yawning. "I knew it wouldn't."

"End it, end it," concurred the assessor.

Dr. Zeunemann, nevertheless went on to ask if a beggar or hawker had rung her doorbell around midday, but when the witness started to discuss in detail a whole string of possibilities, he interrupted her with the request that she tell the court only what she knew for certain. Frau Rubsamen indicated with her hand decisively that she had nothing further to say, whereupon the investigation into suspicious visitors to the houses on that fateful day was temporarily suspended.

Part eight

"It was most kind of you to stand bail for me," said Deruga to Peter Hase, offering his hand. "It was you all over, a gentleman through and through. I'm your devoted servant."

The faintest blush spread across the writer's face. "They gave me their firm promise they wouldn't mention my name," he said, knitting his eyebrows. "I don't understand how they came to let it slip."

Deruga gave a laugh. "I set a little trap for you, and you fell in," he said, "so it really was you. Admit it, I'm an expert in human nature! If I could sit still like you Germans, I might even make a writer."

"And a better one than me," said Peter Hase earnestly. "At all events you have a better understanding of how to write your own life."

"With you it's more likely to be straightforward," said Deruga. "Society man, rich wife, darling of the public, privy councillor, say a life peerage. A somewhat charted course, but comfortable. Eh? Never stepping outside that ever so lightly perfumed atmosphere."

"I'd like to spend some time with you this evening," said Peter Hase, changing the subject. "If you've nothing better planned?"

"Only bed and sleep," said Deruga. "Both marvellous but I can have them any time. But perhaps you've only got today."

He turned to Councillor Fein: "Will you join us, Councillor?"

The lawyer said he'd have to go and see where his family were, but yes, he had half an hour to spare. He was pleased to make Peter Hase's acquaintance, he said, as the three of them sat over a meal in the roped off part of a restaurant. He confessed that he was only a simple sort of person, confined to his profession, with no time left for belles-lettres, but Hase's name and reputation were not unknown to him. In his youth he had considered himself a connoisseur and epicure in the the arts, but that had no doubt been youthful presumption.

"I think so too," said Deruga. "A choice beef steak, somewhat rare, straight off the grill, now that's something to get your teeth into."

The Councillor smiled good-naturedly. "Ah well, everyday one has the chance to study but a good book seldom comes along. And you know, the stories I read were true stories. That way you can learn something. But as regards letting the imaginations of other kinds of author lead me by the nose, my time is too valuable for that."

"Unfortunately life in general is mundane and dull," said Peter Hase, "and literature is supposed to be a beautiful, muti-coloured tapestry."

"Yes," said Deruga, "a crimson sea full of monsters, miracles, precious objects, and rarities. Green as glass, luscious as opal, black as a storm, inexhaustible, unfathomable, forever seething with enchanting births, ravenous for every living thing. And that's what life is."

Peter Hase looked intently at Deruga, whose narrow eyes seemed to reflect his illusions. "You are a poet who follows his feelings," he said. "It's all due to your feelings."

"And at bottom its all the horrible selfsame street muck," said Deruga, changing his tone.

"Now, you're going too far again," said Councillor Fein. "Take our trial! You're sufficiently out of the ordinary for me, and at any rate the Baroness Truschkowitz is an unusual gal."

"I hate that kind of woman," Deruga broke in immediately, "self-centred, acquisitive, limited, cold, and for ever lusting after new. Without money she'd be a whore."

"Now, now, my dear friend," said the Councillor in gentle reproof, "you do seem to me to be a wee bit prejudiced."

"So, you think it's proper, do you," asked Deruga, his hackles starting to rise, "out of greed to cast suspicion of murder on someone unknown, someone who had done her no harm? I'm supposed to have killed an ageing woman who was my wife, the mother of my only child, my dear sacred child, either because she wouldn't give me any money or not enough money, and maybe to get my hands on her fortune two months sooner. I-I swear to you-would never entertain such a thought."

"For God's sake!" said the Councillor. "Such things do happen. Life doesn't always wear a rosy hue. People have been killed just for a couple of talers. Besides, you're forgetting, or wanting to forget, that the Baroness has not, in so many words, attributed such a motive to you, and if there are those who see you as being vindictive, hot-headed and madcap, then they're not actually doing you such an injustice."

Deruga propped his head on his hand and didn't answer.

"I feel obliged to tell you," began Peter Hase after a pause, "that following her invitation I paid the Baroness a visit. She struck me as being a lady."

"What other impression was she to give you?" asked Deruga sharply. "That of a street cleaner or a stable maid? Anyway, it doesn't matter. Presumably she's wanting to flirt with the famous writer."

"She flirts no more than every woman does," said Peter Hase. "As a matter of fact she does it in a particularly tasteful manner and in a style that is appropriate to her age. It seemed to me, though, that the thought was creeping into her mind that I should marry her daughter. She spoke to me again and again about her daughter."

"Well, well," said Deruga with a scornful laugh, "whore and procuress-they're virtually the same, except it's especially vile, procuring for your own daughter. Yes, a woman who needs to be able to read men. You'll agree with me, gentlemen, that we've all had our wallows in the mud."

"That may be so, but we're not as pure as a young lady of good family," said Peter Hase unalterably calm and polite, "but I don't know if that's altogether desirable."

"No, women themselves obviously don't desire it," said Deruga. "Enough! Now what do you make of the little Baroness?"

"Until I've seen her and spoken with her," said Peter Hase, "I have no way of knowing. Since her fortune is not exceptional, she'll need to have special qualities to be considered for marriage."

"So you're not counting on my fortune," observed Deruga. "That's decent of you and very sensible. The Germans may be good dogs, but an Italian deer, even though it may not run as fast, is nimbler and doesn't let itself get caught."

"You're morose today," said the Councillor, getting up to take his leave, "and in your situation perhaps I would be too. When it comes to German dogs, I'm definitely not a good runner but I'm not bad at barking and biting, in view of which I put myself at your disposal. Goodbye!"

"Nothing now, thank God, until the day after tomorrow," said Deruga, attempting to adopt a kindly smile, but failing. "Tomorrow's Sunday."

Councillor Fein said he'd very likely call on him for a short chat.

"Just as well," replied Deruga, "it's not for nothing they refer to Sunday as the suicide wagon on the train of life, and to Monday as the gravedigger."

Part nine

On Sunday, however, Deruga unexpectedly showed himself to be a benevolent man; a friend from his childhood and youth arrived. Dr. Carlo Gabussi, a country doctor from a village above Belluno, had come to Munich, in response to newspaper reports of the trial, to stand by Deruga should the need arise. The two friends embraced and kissed each other again and again, and it was a while before they were able to hold a coherent conversation.

"My dear friend, have you actually come all this way on my account?" Deruga asked. "It's not worth the trouble, the travelling, the expense, and all that."

"Nonsense," said Gabussi, "I was glad of the chance to travel. It's been ten years since I last came down from my blessed village, and if there's anything I can possibly do for you, I'll be more than happy to do it. Think of all the sacrifices you made for me; time now for me to do something in return!"

"Things I did for you?" laughed Deruga. "What about the time, day after day for months, you sat by my side when I was in hospital?"

"Well," said Gabussi, "it's true you didn't fall ill just for my sake, but it meant I could come and see you and didn't have to stay at home all the time where there was so little to interest me. You listened to me when I told you

about my sweetheart, and you wrote poems for me to give to her."

Deruga asked how she was and if they still hadn't married.

"No," said Gabussi with a hint of melancholy, "'As things stand, my mother is living with me, my sister is lame, and I'm not up to having another woman in the house. It would be impossible for her to earn any money in the village because no woman teacher who was married would get appointed. But I'm so lucky in having my mother with me still! She weighs so little these days that I can carry her on one arm, and I carry her to bed every night, although it frightens her; but I can't stop doing it, and deep down she likes it. My Lisa now has a few white hairs among her beautiful black ones. To me they look like a silver trace left behind by God's caressing hand. Can you picture it? And every time I see her so well and happy among her pupils, it's then my heart seems to tighten, and I think if only it were our children hanging on to her hand! But that's me being selfish and unjust when I consider how well things are with me compared with you for example, Dodo, my dear old chap. But how do you come to get caught up in such an infernal tangle! No, don't talk about it if you don't care to. We've got time, I'm staying with you for as long as you need me."

"Then for me," said Deruga, "this horrible mess is a blessing in disguise, for without it, Gabassi, I wouldn't have seen you so soon! You've grown a wee bit thinner but you still have that same honourable, kind old face and startled look!"

"Well, you're no longer my bronzed David," replied Gabussi. "You're looking grey. That comes from a lack of fresh air and exercise. Let's go for a walk, or better still, I'll hire a carriage and you can show me the city and the surrounding area."

The day was grey and mild and the open carriage drove slowly through the thawing streets to the sound of dripping melt-water which accompanied them like a musical entourage. Deruga, snugly leant back, was answering the questions put to him by Gabussi, who was delighted by the magnificent squares and buildings. In a quiet street into which the coachman, to whose discretion they had entrusted the route of their tour, turned, Deruga suddenly recognised a wrought-iron gate. The cobblestone way that led along the front of the houses lay deserted and the lilac bushes had not yet come into leaf, only a willow stretched out its sprouting branches in a splendidly radiant arch.

"What is it?" asked Gabussi, slipping his arm beneath that of his friend, who was sitting upright.

"We've just passed the house where poor Marmotte lived," said Deruga.

Gabussi was silent. After a long pause he said: "There was a time when you were happy, Dodo."

"Not back then," came the reply. "My spirit was too restless, my heart too sensitive, and my intelligence too sharp. I think I'd need to be a god to be happy with the gifts that are mine."

"But it is good to be as gifted as you are," said Gabussi. "Do you recall how often our religious teacher would say

to you: 'Sigismondo, you're intelligent, intelligent enough, but intelligence is an infernal hell, whereas reason is a divine light, and many an old broombinder has more of that than you have.'"

Deruga laughed. "But he didn't have a lot to say about reason," he said. "Don't you also remember how he warned you against me and predicted that I'd end up a freemason and atheist, if I didn't become some sort of saint."

Meanwhile the carriage had reached the public parks and there they could see between the thick trunks of willows and poplars a strong fast-flowing river making its way through broad meadows. A powerful memory from the recent past mingled wondrously with memories of his childhood, causing him to feel tender and dreamy. "Those days when we were boys," said Gabussi, "you were happy then."

"I would have been if I hadn't felt, deep beneath the happiness, how ugly, wretched, false, and unjust everything was around me," said Deruga.

"You who had such an angel for a mother!" exclaimed Gabussi. "And do you remember how glad you were to be with us, and how you stood stockstill when my mother kissed you on the forehead and called you 'little stranger'? And how we would sit under the roof, learning our homework and being frightened of shadows."

As the two friends were returning from their excursion, Deruga was overcome by a feeling of blissful contentment.

"When this stupid business is over," he said to Gabussi, "I'll start a new life. What do you say to my coming to you in the mountains?"

"But, Dodo," cried Gabussi, beside himself with joy, "it would be paradise for me! And how happy it will make my mother and my sister! And how happy Lisa will be for me. It's the greatest happiness for my Lisa whenever I'm blessed with a piece of good fortune. To think that there'll be times when you'll be accompanying me on my walks, when we can chat and gossip and swap memories as we've been doing today!"

They were interrupted by a gentle tapping that had gone unheard several times already. When Gabussi went to the door and opened it he saw a small, dainty, blond-haired young woman with large, dark brown eyes that looked at him with a mixture of anxiety and vigour.

"I wish to speak with Dr. Deruga," said a light and somewhat subdued voice that quivered a little with anticipation. "Are you he?"

Gabussi shook his head and pointed to his friend, asking him with a glance if he should leave or not.

"No, stay," begged Deruga, laying a hand on his friend's arm. He asked the young lady to whom did he have the honour of speaking.

"I am Mingo von Truschkowitz," said the little lady, "and I've come to tell you that I am very sorry my mother was the instigator of the legal action taken against you, and that I've had nothing, absolutely nothing to do with it. Seeing as how my aunt left her fortune to you, then it should come to you. Actually my mother hasn't the least

right to it, because she never concerned herself about Frau Swieter."

"Poor child," said Deruga, "it must have been very difficult for you to come to me all by yourself. My own little Mingo would have been just the age you are," he added, after a pause during which his eyes rested tenderly on her.

"The same," said Mingo, hesitating a fraction. "That is exactly what your late wife said when she saw me."

"You visited my wife?" asked Deruga. "When was that? Tell me about it."

"It was eight years ago," Mingo recalled. "I went to visit her because I'd heard so much about her that attracted me. At home I was finding everything conventional, and mundane, and unimportant. I loved imagining that there was some kind of connection between your Mingo and me simply because I had the same name. I liked your wife so much it was as if she were from some mysterious fairy tale; but she said I mustn't come again unless I had my parents' permission. Perhaps my visit made her sad as well because I reminded her of her dead child."

"At least there's one little Mingo alive," Deruga said warmly. "In your opinion," he asked after a pause, "am I then wrongly accused?"

"Going by what your wife told me when I was with her," she said with emphasis, "I'm convinced you could never have done anything with the intention of hurting her."

"I did a lot of things that hurt her," said Deruga, "but out of love."

"That doesn't count," said Mingo with firmness before continuing hesitantly: "Your wife showed me a picture of you."

"Obviously not a good likeness," said Deruga smiling, "or else I've changed a lot since then."

"Not as much as I first thought," she said.

Gabussi professed that his friend's looks had changed only to his advantage and straightway urged the little lady to confirm it.

"I don't know about that," she said, blushing deeply, "but Dr. Deruga doesn't look an old man."

"Compared to you I am very old and wise," said Deruga kindly, "and by virtue of this wisdom I'm giving you this advice: don't fall out with your mother on my account, even though she is doing me an injustice. A child owes its mother too much to become her creditor. If you're of a different mind from hers, then speak out, but always in a gentle, loving voice. Will you promise me that?"

He stretched out his hand to her and Mingo, completely overcome, laid her little hand in his.

When she'd gone, Carlo Gabussi, enraptured, embraced his friend, praised the little lady and inquired about the mother, who could only be a she-devil.

"If only that were all," said Deruga. "She's a slippery, hollow, hedonistic woman, too superficial to be wicked, a reflection of our society where the big robbers are

honoured and the little ones are hanged. Outwardly she's not unpleasant."

"And why does she hate you so?" asked Gabussi.

"Because I got the money when she'd already made plans for it herself," said Deruga. "By the way, in other respects I don't seem to have displeased her one bit."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Gabussi. "Have you spoken with her, then?"

"Up to now only with my eyes," said Dodo, "but I have a good understanding of women. If I gave it my time and attention, she'd be very inclined to begin an affair with me."

"Really, Dodo," exclaimed a scandalised Gabussi, "that's repugnant, decadent! Flirting with a man who's on the point of being sent to prison, or even to the scaffold. I can't understand such a thing. If only I could extricate from your womanising, which are the ultimate cause of your unhappiness. You should marry again: some simple, solid, loving wife, and then come to me up in the mountains. Just what benefit do you derive from all your unhealthy disorderliness? Now, fresh air, light, cleanliness, those are what modern medicine prescribes as the most important things."

"Excellent for healthy souls," said Deruga, "but sick ones need warm muck and cosy decay."

"Nonsense," said Gabussi, roused to anger. "those phrases have no meaning whatsoever, and the same goes for your premise that you're sick. You're just making things easy for yourself. And you're too good-hearted. Promise me you won't start any new caper! Not even out of pity. Love drives women only deeper and deeper into the mire. And promise me as well that if this Baroness is really wanting to flirt with you, that you'll send her packing, which is what she deserves."

Deruga could have split his sides laughing at the sight of his friend standing in front of him, gesticulating with his long arms like a hell-fire preacher.

"Except," said Deruga when he dare risk opening his mouth again, "what I really feel like doing is tantalising her so that later I can hurt her all the more and shame her. She's a person I can't stand."

"Ah, Dodo!" sighed Gabussi, "that's lewd and damaging. If you can't stand her then leave her alone. Do it for the sake of her delightful child if you can't manage to do it out of respect for yourself."

The expression on Deruga's face softened. "Little Mingo," he said, "I wouldn't hurt her for the world."

"There, you see," said Gabussi eagerly. "It must have been a tragedy for you to lose your daughter. With her hand to hold you would surely have walked only by truly beautiful pathways."

"Or I might have pulled her down into the mire with me," said Deruga, his tone suddenly darkened.

"Good grief, man, don't talk so despairingly! Gabussi retorted, "otherwise I might even lose faith in you."

Deruga embraced his friend and kissed him. "Same as ever," he laughed. "Have you forgotten that I'm not to be taken seriously? I'm not some spalier-trained peach. My words are not to be eaten raw; first you have to boil out whatever dirt that's there and then skim it off. Have you forgotten?"

It was Gabussi's turn to laugh. "You're right, I'm a heavy-footed fool," he said. "In your unfortunate position, it's no wonder there are times when black moods get the better of you. Before all else you have to put an end to them."

Gabussi asked the Councillor what his thoughts were, and the latter spoke with some optimism. Clearly Deruga had not made a particularly good impression, and there remained too many unknowns for every suspicion to be removed; nevertheless there was definitely not enough evidence available, in his view, for a conscientious juror to find him guilty.

Gabussi's feelings as a friend were not satisfied with that. He insisted on appearing as a witness so that people could see Deruga through his, Gabussi's, eyes; that way they would see him as he really was and acquit him, not because they'd not been able to convict him, but because they had been convinced of his innocence.

"They approached you with their minds already made up," he told his friend. "They became acquainted with you through a newspaper clipping. Can a painting be judged properly from a tiny piece measuring millimetres? I want to tell them about your childhood, your youth, what you are like in the clear light of day, without any exaggeration. This is an inductive method, and it will appeal to the scientific Germans."

Gabussi's appearance in court made a favourable impression. His honest brown eyes, his simple manner, and his open way of talking were, people found, worthy of a German. Having spent a couple of semesters in Vienna as a student he spoke German rather well, provided he proceeded slowly and carefully. He had known the accused, he explained, since early childhood, they'd gone to the same school and later to the same high school. Dodo, as he was called, was always welcome in his, Gabussi's, parents' home. He had to cope with difficult conditions and people admired how much he managed to achieve.

"What did those 'difficult conditions' consist of?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"His family's situation was far from easy," explained Gabussi. "He had a lot to do at home, so that he often had to stay up all night to finish his schoolwork."

"How did that come about?" asked the Presiding Judge. "What did his father do?"

"At that time his father was a fruit-seller," answered Gabussi. "He occupied a small arch behind the old city hall."

"Ah now," said the Presiding Judge, flicking through his documents, "according to Deruga's statement, his father was a merchant."

"Well," said Gabussi, "a fruit-seller is still a merchant. Incidentally," he added, casting an uneasy look at his

friend, "that wasn't always his occupation. He was a good but restless man."

The Presiding Judge asked the witness to give a more detailed sketch of the father's character.

Gabussi stated that he had seen and spoken with him too little to be able to give a measure judgement. Whenever he was around he'd usually be sitting on his own in a corner with a melancholy look on his face; just once in a while he'd be in a mischievous mood when he'd laugh and joke.

"So he wasn't always there? Asked Dr. Zeunemann.

"No," said Gabussi, "occasionally he'd throw some kind of fit that forced him to leave the family and go gadding off somewhere for weeks, even months."

"Did he drink?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"Oh not in any great amount," said Gabussi, "he was just odd. From time to time he'd get this irresistible yearning to experience something new, he had a thist for adventure, you could say. He wasn't cut out for family life, which was unfortunate for his wife and his children. Luckily his wife was an angel, simply an angel, and no less was Dodo, the eldest son. He was her image, inside and out."

"There were other siblings, weren't there?" cut in the Presiding Judge. "What happened to them?"

"Oh none of them have done particularly well," said Gabussi hesitantly. "They inherited their father's unfortunate addiction to adventure."

"And the eldest had nothing like that?" asked Dr. Zeunemann.

"Quite the opposite," said Gabussi fervently. "Even as a child he was always his mother's support. He looked after the little children, helped in the house and the business, and sang like a lark as he did so. His mother too was unfailingly cheerful and full of gratitude to God for having given her such a son. 'He has sent me the sweetest of His angels,' she would say, 'so that while I'm on earth, I'm in heavenly bliss.' If ever she had cause to worry about his having to work so hard she consoled herself with the knowledge that God would always send strength to His favoured one.

"She would sit beside him at night, sewing or darning, while he did his homework, or later when he was immersed in his university studies. To be frank, as long as the father was away, they lived in paradise."

"Did the father illtreat his wife and children?" asked PJ

"That's something I can't say much about," answered Gabussi, again sending a concerned glance towards his friend, "neither Dodo nor his mother gave any hint of it. Mind you, after her death there were occasional rows between father and son, stemming from the fact that the poor wife had always been able to keep her husband under some sort of control."

"Presumably, business and housekeeping went downhill?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"My friend did everything he could," explained Gabussi. "He was father and mother to his younger siblings, even though he was but a tender youth. Sometimes in the evening, when

it was getting dark, he'd be off, wheeling his cart, going house to house with deliveries. The father, though, was gradually losing his mind. He put his younger children up to all kinds of naughty and harmful tricks. He might have caused immeasurable damage if he hadn't been afraid of Dodo."

"Had he become infirm and frail?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"Not in the least," said Gabussi brightly. "He was a big man, far stronger than Dodo. But Dodo's strength, when he was in a temper, increased a hundredfold. His strength, when he was in a temper, increased a hundredfold. His mother would have said that God had filled His favoured one with His breath to protect him. I've watched his father sneak away from him like a dog that knows it deserved its beating."

Slowly the Councillor drew himself up to his full height. "Gentlemen," he said, "I believe I know what many of you are thinking: that here once more we see the dangerous and uncontrollable temperament of this man. Why shouldn't someone, who was violent towards his father, not be violent to his wife, and so on...I, gentlemen, think otherwise: I see that this almost pathological ferocity continues to be generated when it's a matter of preventing something evil or of punishing it. We have in Deruga an unusually hot-tempered man but what makes him see red are badness, ugliness, and disharmony. As to whether he ever laid hands on anyone for selfish reasons or did anyone a wrong, there has been, so far, no example of it."

"But jealousy is most definitely selfish," retorted the Prosecutor, "especially when there's no reason for it. Furthermore, when it comes to those who are prone to illness or--to put it more frankly--who are unbalanced, it won't do to equate the last years of childhood with youth. With the father of the accused we have seen how his ill-fated tendencies were coming to the fore, and how ruinous was the removal of the barrier to those tendencies which the presence of his devout wife had kept at bay. There is something similar in relation to the accused: its with the separation from his wholly respectable lady wife, that his fall begins."

"His fall!" said the Councillor maintaining his composure. "There I must protest, or request that the term expressed be stated more precisely, seeing that it deviates from its conventional and well-tried usage. Admittedly a certain negligence was noted in Deruga's professional standing, in his dignity, in his honour. But moral decay need not go hand in hand with those signs, in fact self-neglect can even be associated with a heightening one's spirituality. As a subject of the state I am indeed for civic order; however, we must not forget that even the state and every one of its man-made institutions is maintained by forces that come from without, or, arguably, from what I take it to be, from chaos."

An ironic smile contorted the Prosecutor's face. "That's philosophy," he said, "and philosophy will allow you to demonstrate the necessity of having mass-murderers and poisoners. We, however, are simply and completely concerned

with punishable acts. Christ may have been able to love tax-collectors and sinners, we on the other hand have to be content with punishing them."

The Presiding Judge hand looked as if it were rubbing chalk marks from a blackboard. "That's going too far," he said, and turned to the witness: "Did you yourself ever have rows with your friend?"

"Me? Never, never!" replied Gabussi vigorously, "and its certainly not easy to get along with me. My phlegmatic temperament--it being the one nature gave me--can only rile someone with a fiery nature like my friend. My slowness in understanding things might well have tried his patience, but he was always willing to make allowances and be a help to me."

"An angel," added the Prosecutor with a smirk.

"Did the accused have many friends besides you?" asked Dr. Zeunemann.

"He got on well with nearly everyone," answered Gabussi, "but he was friends only with me. I'm convinced I was the only one who knew what was going on inside him. "

"That's really odd," said the Presiding Judge, "for a man whose fiery, gregarious temperament you yourself have emphasised."

"Yes, so you would think," said Gabussi, and if you had seen him among the children he went to school with as well as his pals at university, you would doubtless have thought that he had sworn eternal friendship with them all. I remember that at first I didn't venture near him because I thought he, who was surrounded by so many others it was like a family, would be put off by my awkwardness. But that pleasant nature of his which attracted everyone, was simply a veil, beneath which he concealed his soul so as to make it unapproachable. No one is more difficult to know than those who wear their heart on their sleeve. There are those who keep discreetly to the background or present an aloof exterior in order to ward off others. That wasn't his way. He erected all round himself a wall of ready conversation and amicability. The more eager Gabussi became in explaining his friend's singularity to the Presiding Judge, the more the Presiding Judge's sympathetic interest grew.

"I follow you, I follow you," he said. "The same occurs in people who are of a passionate, overly excitable disposition. Lest they overstep themselves, they have to be forever on their guard, and their liveliness is one way of doing so."

"Yes, yes, that's how it is," confirmed Gabussi. "At heart he was soft and kind and easily hurt; he was ashamed of revealing this to others who were far more hardened and indifferent than he was: it was his way of disguising. He wasn't like an animal that can protect itself by growing spines or scales, all he could do was to spin coloured threads and let the effect render him unrecognisable. It most probably helped him avoid too close a contact with anyone whose nature was alien to his, yet this could not prevent his painful clashes with the outside world, clashes that made his heart bleed. Ah, what a tragedy it was for him to be blamed so often for having caused others to suffer when all the time others were causing him to suffer."

"Very interesting," said Dr. Zeunemann, "but what was it that caused him to suffer so much? Granted, there was his father, but on the other hand he had a good, loving mother, he had you, and he had the company of his family."

"I can truly say, his love for his mother knew no bounds," declared Gabussi, "and he certainly didn't suffer because of her; more likely, I'd say, he suffered on account of the situation he saw her in. His soul never felt at home in the environment where it had been planted. He had a vibrant sense of beauty, so that anything tasteless, be it people or things, repelled him. It never ceased to amaze me that he—born and raised in poor, or to say the least, very straitened circumstances—could be so exceedingly sensitive to everything petty and ugly and all that they entailed. It was a while before all that dawned on me, me of all people, his friend. At the beginning his laments in this area sounded to me like poems in Arabic or Persian. It was often the subject of our discussions and was a point we never agreed on. Because I didn't understand him I was often unjust towards him, for instance whenever he made wealth out to be the one thing worth striving for. I would then preach to him, or rather at him, like a proper old moral philosopher. For I hadn't the faintest idea of what his needs were that had him yearning for wealth. My own simpler, coarser soul can cope with any surroundings, and of its own accord attune itself, as it were, and provided it's not put into some glittering salon it's able to join in the harmony—though a rich symphony is a different matter. What my friend needed was to be surrounded by beauty in which an infinite number of notes, often some of them discordant, would continually dissolve in one another."

"So here's one point on which you differed," said Dr. Zeunemann.

"That may be so," allowed Gabussi, "but it never went beyond a friendly difference of opinion. We accepted each other's view and there were times when he no doubt envied me for being so much more easily satisfied."

"I'm surprised," continued Dr. Zeunemann cordially, "that your friend, having such a sensitive appreciation of beauty, took up the study of medicine where one has to overcome so much that is ordinarily repellent."

"Oh," said Gabussi, "that stems from his love for all those who are ill and suffering and from his readiness to help them. In that respect he had a genius for his profession. Also he thought it represented the quickest way of earning money, which he desired as much for his family's wants as those of his own, which I referred to earlier."

"And to what do you attribute the fact," asked the Presiding Judge, "that he was not been successful in that regard?"

"However that may be," said Gabussi, "it wasn't because he was incompetent. But as I've already told you, he had a soul that was rich and had many voices. He hankered after wealth yet at the same time despised it. For every handful of money he earned, he threw two away. He worked speedily and he worked well, but he dreamed even better. He was born with all the qualities for a nobleman's life, but without any for amassing wealth. Becoming rich depends not only on the ability to acquire wealth, but equally on the ability

to hang on to it; and that he didn't have. There was in him, as I see it, a tragic division which can be kept in balance only when one perceives the triviality of wealth and all that is accredited to it. Even the poorest person is able to enjoy beauty in abundance if they withdraw into nature. The only mistake Deruga made was not doing that right from the start. Not in the whole, wide world could the conflicts in his soul be resolved."

"We are indebted to you for giving us a very subtle picture of your friend," said Dr. Zeunemann aimably, "which is no less useful for having for been drawn by a friend's hand."

After asking a few minor questions that remained, Dr. Zeunemann concluded the hearing.

When the Councillor and his two friends left the courthouse the streets were full of people going home after their day's work, but, as always, in the grounds behind the lawcourt building everything was quiet. In the fading light objects seemed to have cast off their coloured clothes in order to revel, in their softly shimmering nakedness, on the shore of endless night, before diving into the deep waters. Gabussi declared that he was not quite satisfied with the effect of his testimony. He said it had all come out differently from what he'd intended. Without his knowing how, he'd been carried along in a new direction.

"What you said was fair enough," comforted Deruga, "only it seemed to me unnecessary, as when a delicious Milanese risotto is set before a German who only looks down his nose at it and asks for his potatoes. But what does it matter? It was lovely for me, dreaming with you of the past."

"Yes," said the Councillor, "as Shakespeare said: 'Past suffering serves to sweeten chatter all the more.'"

"Conversely: 'In adversity'-as our own Dante says-'nothing pains more than remembering past happiness,'" Gabussi added.

On the slope Deruga paused where one of the first snowdrops was poking up its yellow tip.

"Here's one of the little creatures," he said. "It's peeping out like a mouse from its hole."

"There-you see," said the Councillor, triumphantly, "you laughed at me when I cleared the dead leaves from its tip."

"You were still wrong to do it," countered Deruga, "now a cat will probably scoop it out."

"Have you got night frost in mind as well? asked the Councillor. "These early plants can withstand a lot. They're equipped for it. Listen, my friend," he added, attempting to move him away, "you're becoming mawkish. I don't like it."

Deruga didn't budge but stayed where he was, staring down at the damp earth. A line from an age old poem stirred in his mind and when it came to him he recited: " 'La doglia mia cresoe coll' ombra.'"

"You make it sound like an Amati violin," said the Councillor, savouring the music of the verse with visible enjoyment. "What is it saying?"

" 'My pain grows with the shadows,' " Deruga translated.

"That is to say, it disappears with the rising sun and signifies no more than the mood of an evening." He shuddered as if he were flinging away grim feelings, and turned smartly to face the exit.

"Once you're back with me in my village," said Gabussi, "moods like that will soon be a thing of the past. It's because the pure sky we have up there consumes the coal dust you get in a big city."

"Would your air really do me as much good as you say?" asked Deruga. "It's just that I'm no farmer."

"You'll become one," exclaimed Gabussi enthusiastically, "when you've first learnt not to care about anything other than a few cows and goats we keep—that's when you'll be healthy."

He invited the Councillor to confirm it.

"A little bit of farming would certainly do you some good," said Cllr carefully.

"You're thinking," said Deruga, "that if this tricky customer were split into his component parts and then reassembled to form a whole new person, then the chances are that he'd be much better off."

The Councillor laughed. "But if the old Deruga were lost," he said, "now that would be a great pity."

When Gabussi was alone with Deruga in his room he continued to paint a picture of life in his village. Deruga would be able to accompany him on his walks. Deruga knew how to get along with simple people and before he knew it they'd be treating him like a god for miles around. The womenfolk would have plenty of gossip to keep him entertained, and besides, if he still needed something to do, he could always work on some medical problem or other. There were a lot of things that needed doing in relation to manual labour. People up there were more than a hundred years behind the times, and their tools were primeval. There was scope for his inventiveness and dexterity.

"Ah, but," said Daruga, "how little you know me. Don't you understand that I'd be bored after a week, and after a fortnight I'd either kill you or kill myself?"

"Bored?" repeated Gabussi in astonishment, his big eyes opening still wider. "Don't you get bored in the city, then?"

"No," said Deruga, "all that milling around like worms on a dungheap. I loathe the city, but at the same time I know how to deal with it. It's life in a shape and form that I can digest. Those mountains of yours lie on my stomach like wet dumplings."

"I don't understand you," said Gabussi, getting worked up, "you can't be serious. What's great and simple must do a chap good."

"Ah, Gabussi," Deruga replied impatiently, "a man isn't a triangle you can apply Pythagoras's Theorem to. Believe me, I would end up leading that good sister of yours astray, just to cloud that clear atmosphere a bit."

"Dodo, if your poor mother could hear you talking like this!" complained Gabussi. "It's only talk, only words, but those words alone are enough to break my heart."

The discussion continued in this vein well into the night without the two friends reaching an understanding. Gabussi insisted on staying in Munich until the trial was ended, and then, should his wish be granted, he would immediately take Deruga with him, even though Deruga himself constantly expressed his increasing aversion to the idea. It would be much better, he maintained, if Gabussi left without further delay, because Gabussi's mother and his sister, not forgetting Gabussi's patients, were impatiently awaiting his return, and here in Munich there was now nothing useful he could achieve. Gabussi, though it left him sad and disappointed, finally yielded.

At the moment of parting, Deruga embraced him with all the old warmth and with tears in his eyes. "Forget all the desperate rubbish I've been talking," he said, "and believe only one thing: that my heart is the same as it has always been, and if you have a stroke tomorrow that turns you into a shaking idiot who can't find his mouth any more, I will take you in and feed you with my own hand for as long as you live. And let me believe the same of you! What a whirlpool of filth life would be if there were no hearts that remained steadfast."

"Thank God!" said Gabussi, his big brown eyes glistening, "I think I'd have to doubt the heaven above my head if I ever came to lose my faith in you."

Part ten

The Baroness was sitting with her daughter before the gas-heated fireplace observing the young lady's slender feet that were propped against the fireguard.

"What would you say, Mingo, if I were to give you permission to study at the university?"

Mingo went and stood by the window behind her mother, staring down at the black surface of the road, shining after a heavy spring shower and reflecting the lights of the streetlamps that had only just come on. Her voice sounded weak and tired as she asked her questioner: "Do you have it in mind, then, to permit me?"

"What's going through my mind," said the Baroness, "is that I'll never be able to bring myself to force you into a marriage you don't want; that being so, we'll have to consider what's to become of you, should you marry late or not at all. Will studying bring you happiness, do you think?"

"Heavens, Mama! Mind you, it will keep me occupied in a useful and interesting way."

The Baroness was amazed and said with a slight touch of reluctance: "Earlier, when you were tormenting me so severely with what you wished for, it was as if your salvation depended on it."

Mingo stepped away from the window and settled herself comfortably in a chair which she'd moved next to her

mother's. "Do all wishes fade, I wonder, when they get close to their fulfilment? But perhaps, Mama, it's just this evening I can't be particularly joyful. I'm tired. If you'll allow me to take the matter to bed with me, I'll wake up in the morning with it all happily settled."

The Baroness gave her daughter a kind, thoughtful look. "No, don't go to bed just yet, dear," she said. "It's so nice chatting with you when you're by yourself. You know, you're still free to marry, but it's nowhere near as interesting as you're probably imagining it, especially if one only marries for money."

"Did you marry Papa for his money?" asked Mingo.

"No," replied the Baroness, "not in the sense that I would have found him unacceptable without money. Quite the reverse. I found him likeable, and he attracted me, though it perhaps wouldn't have led to marriage if he hadn't been so well-off."

"Didn't you find him as attractive later on?" asked Mingo timidly.

"But I still do," said the Baroness. "He's so remarkably genteel, never obtrusive, has faultless taste. The only thing is that he's boring. Can you imagine that?"

"Yes," nodded Mingo, "I can imagine. But I thought, when people love each other ..."

"Little silly," laughed the Baroness. "Once you're married, love can't take up a whole evening."

"Ah," said Mingo, going into a brief daydream, her large, dark eyes gazing at the wavering redness on the copper of the fireplace. "But there are the children," she continued.

The Baroness responded with her charmingly youthful laugh: "You, child, ran away from me soon enough."

Mingo suddenly felt a surge of love and compassion rising in her for her mother; she sprang into her lap, wrapped her arms round her and kissed her.

"Hey, mind my hair and my lace," exclaimed the startled Baroness; nevertheless it was plain that she yielded, not unwillingly, to this disrupting outburst of tenderness.

"You see," said Mingo, more cheerful than previously, "it's better to study anyway! It's not boring and it doesn't run away."

"For me it's too late," the Baroness admitted, "but for you, it could be the very thing!"

Mingo consoled her mother by telling her she was indeed clever enough and that she could study too, if she wanted to.

The Baroness shook her head. "My brain has always lacked exercise," she said, "it's able to hop gracefully over a stream and pick a flower and that sort of thing, but nothing that requires brain muscle. I can't exert myself any more, not on any account. I might perhaps have managed it at one time, provided it was necessary or there'd been a compelling reason for it."

"Mama," said Mingo, still seated on her mother's lap, "were you never in love, before your marriage or afterwards?"

"No," replied the Baroness, "not what you might describe as

being really in love, no never. You know, when I was your age I thought love was that feeling you got from being flattered by admirers. The more ardent the admirer, the more pleasing the sensation. As for me being actually in love, I had neither the talent for it, nor the need. And when I got married, I resolved never to have any guilty feelings, and I've kept to it."

Mingo meanwhile had crouched on the floor by her mother's feet, and was staring once more into the mysteriously undulating reflections on the copper surround.

"Then you've no proper notion of what it's like to be enraptured by a passion?" she asked.

"You seem to be almost reproaching me for it," said the Baroness with a trace of sharpness in her voice which soon gave way to a gentler tone: "Incidentally my self-control wasn't actually on account of your father, no, it resulted from my own nature. Big issues and major changes leave me cold. Once I've made my choice, I stand by it. I think good taste demands it."

"Yes, Mama," said Mingo, planting a kiss on her mother's well cared-for and heavily and expensively beringed hand, "and Papa and I have cause to be thankful to you. But it's you I'm almost sad for."

"Don't give a thought, little one," said the Baroness. "What doesn't suit a person, wouldn't make them happy. I've devised a different route to happiness."

"What do you mean, Mama?" asked a startled Mingo.

The Baroness flushed, though it wasn't apparent in the red reflection of the fire's glow. "I'll tell you another time, darling," she said. "I've just heard a motor car drive up. That'll be your father."

"Mama," said Mingo hurriedly, "You still haven't given me your promise that you'll abandon your lawsuit. Without that nothing, nothing can make me happy. I'll gladly forego going to university, and for as long as I live I'll stay with you so you don't get bored—if only you do that one thing for my sake."

"Mingo, don't get so upset," said the Baroness, trying to ward her off, "you know I don't like it. Nothing in the world is worth getting excited about. I've told you, I'll discuss it with my lawyer."

"Ah, your lawyer," said Mingo, "the one who badgered you into it. He's an obnoxious man! There's something creepy, slimy, dribbly about him, as if he'd been born for spying. I fail to comprehend how you come to be associated with a person like that."

"But he's not an associate," retorted the Baroness. "I use him because in this case he's just the man for the job. If he were an aristocrat, I suspect he wouldn't serve my purposes half as well. Perhaps he's exploiting me, although that would not be possible for him if he didn't think I was right and that my case could be successful. You act as if it were a private matter, but it's about a crime that is of public interest."

"You should have no hand in it," Mingo insisted. "You've told me yourself you're not as convinced of his guilt as you once were."

"My conviction is neither here nor there. The jurors have the task of seeing that justice is done. It's simply a question of justice. I personally don't want anything to be forced through that's not in accordance with the law."

"Oh Mama," cried Mingo, "it appears to everyone that you had your own eyes set on the inheritance—an inheritance that wasn't even meant for you."

The Baroness was visibly wounded. "A child who has been reared amid affluence is not in the habit," she said, "of thinking about where it all comes from. It's easy for you to be contemptuous of money. If I have a right to it, it would be absurd of me to forego it. Whether I have a right to it, and Deruga not, and I'm able to validate my claim with some prospect of success, then it will be revealed by this trial. There will still be time for me afterwards to petition the court, if I choose to."

"In the meantime, though," Mingo requested, "you could instruct your lawyer to cease his inquiries."

"I'll discuss it with him," said the Baroness evasively, "and listen to what he has to say. If he thinks Deruga is innocent, I'll be the first to rejoice. In this matter one's own wishes are of no importance, neither yours nor mine."

Part eleven

Shortly after Gabussi's departure Councillor Fein paid a visit to his client and found him sitting alone in his cold room. He had opened the window because the small iron stove was giving off too much heat, and he'd forgotten to close it again long after it had grown cold. Now and again the wind would drive inside rain from a downpour, but it went unheeded by the room's solitary occupant who stared morosely in front of him. "So your friend has left," said the Councillor. "That's a pity. It must be making you very despondent."

"I'm glad he's gone," retorted Deruga. "Gabussi is to me the dearest man on earth, but there times when he gets in my way. He's able to go through life sober, whereas occasionally I need to get drunk."

"All right," said the Councillor, who in the meantime had closed the window and seated himself, "and now its time for your saturnalia? You choose your time, don't you!"

Deruga gave a shrug. "I go by the calendar that we all carry in our body."

"As you wish," said the Councillor. "It's something altogether different that has brought me here. Are you acquainted with a Frau Valeska from Prague?"

"Yes," said the latter, "a concoction of stupidity and infatuation. Formula D₂V."

"You must know that," said the Councillor, "because it appears it's you she's in love with."

"Really, I can't do a thing about it," Deruga declared. "If you were to spend half an hour with her and possibly treat her somewhat rudely, she'd fall in love with you too."

"Well, we'll see," said the Councillor. "It so happens, she wants to come here."

Deruga laughed and then got annoyed. What did the stupid thing want? The Councillor should write and tell her that he, Deruga, was detained, awaiting trial and not only couldn't but wouldn't have anything to do with her."

"It's probably too late now," said the Councillor. "She's hell-bent on testifying that you were with her from the evening of the first to the afternoon of the third of October. It looks like we might have an alibi."

"Seriously?" asked Deruga. "The silly woman wants to do that? Now that's very good of her, in fact. There's not a better way of untying the knot."

"I wouldn't go as far as saying that," said the Councillor cautiously. "It's no small matter when someone commits perjury."

"That's her look out," said Deruga fiercely. "God, all this nitpicking and rummaging about for words. There are lies that have a more respectable origin than truths. Anyway, it's a matter for her. I've had to put up with so much pestering on her part, so why shouldn't I now derive some benefit from it?"

"Certainly," said the Councillor, "that is it can be managed without doing her any harm."

"Odd that you've become so apprehensive all of a sudden," said Deruga sharply. "It's due to you that I come to be in this situation. If I'd followed my own reasoning, it would have been over, one way or another, long ago. Now that a means of getting the trial off my back comes along, you make excuses on moral grounds."

Deruga face had turned red with fury and he shot a raging look at the CLR who was watching him thoughtfully.

"First I had to get a clear picture," said the Councillor, "so that I know how you stand with regard to this new turn of events and finally whether you are in favour. Was anything actually going on between you and the lady? Were you keen on her?"

"Me, keen on her?" said Deruga. "It was her who was keen on me. She tormented me with her infatuation. By the way, you're wrong if you're thinking she's some kind of self-sacrificing heroine. She's too stupid to foresee the consequences of her actions, and so much in love that she can justify whatever means she uses to get me."

"But she's mistaken?" asked the Councillor.

"Of course," said Deruga curtly. "Were you thinking I should marry her out of gratitude?"

"Oh no," the Councillor responded, "You're wanting to aim much higher now."

"Now?" repeated Deruga quick-temperedly. "What do you mean by that? How dare you ! Do you think you can treat me like some stupid boy because I'm on trial, an outlaw? I tell you, I'm too good to throw myself away on anyone so stupid and uneducated. Women, to me, are utterly repulsive."

"With exceptions," said the Councillor coolly.

"That's true," said Deruga, continuing in his heated voice, "with the exception of, for example, Baroness Truschkowitz, who is greedy, vain, self-centred; but for all that she's clever, elegant and wholly immoral. Females are made that way, it's so you can converse with them more easily."

"All a matter of taste," said the Councillor, "Anyhow, she'd be committing perjury for you."

"No, she's neither naïve nor acting out of dog-like devotion," said Deruga, "and I have no liking for dogs. Why should you worry about Valeska? Let her ruin herself if she wants to! You've got me to look after."

"That's what I'm doing," said the Councillor, "and I even doubt if it would be honourable for you to accept such a sacrifice."

Deruga gave a scornful laugh. "One of those grandiose words one normally hears in your company. Honour, moral, God, immortality ... they're nothing but pillars painted on a sacking backcloth. It doesn't take thirty pieces of silver to get 'thee' to betray 'thy' God. Incidentally, who says Valeska will be perjuring herself? How do you know I wasn't with her from the first of October to the third?"

The Councillor got up to go. "Enough for today," he said, "but I'm presuming that's not your last word."

"And do let me ask you, if you please, not to start up one more time with your 'we'll remain good friends'. Neither you nor I are Valeska's keeper. You'd do best getting used to the fact that she was foolish enough to provide me with accomodation from the first to the third of October last year."

Part twelve

The Baroness had invited Peter Hase to lunch so that he could meet her daughter. She had chosen a room in her hotel that was small and comfortable; its walls, painted in white, black and gold, were ablaze with a riotous splendour of flowering shrubs.

The Baroness smilingly informed her guest that in every regard he was totally unknown to her daughter.

"My daughter," she said, "inherited from her father a certain indifference towards literature: what I might, perhaps, term a particular lack of imagination."

"I would be happy to call it good taste," said Peter Hase, "for youth and books don't go together. Also it might be that the Baron adopts the view of the Ancients who despised poets for being liars."

"I've read too little to be able to judge," said the Baron, "but this much I will say: I willingly read newspapers because they report the truth."

"Oh, Papa, newspapers," laughed Mingo, "are said to be the biggest liars of all."

"Newspapers more than likely constitute the most interesting of modern epics," said Peter Hase, "but in any case the most beautiful poetry is life."

The Baroness was doubtful and slowly shook her head. "It's my belief, also with regard to life, that great talents are rare among people. Few live a great, beautifully contoured life. For most it turns out to be disjointed, petty, mundane and very boring."

"Hasty readers," said Peter Hase, "need you to go deep."

"Ah, it's not worthwhile," said the Baroness, "and where it is worthwhile, it's nauseating. Perhaps that was what you experienced with the mysterious lady who appears suddenly to be giving our trial a new turn."

"For the moment, at all events, she gives one the impression that she's more ordinary than mysterious," said Peter Hase, "a vegetative creature, goodnatured, weak, sluggish, with a tendency towards heroism, as is sometimes the case with unsophisticated women."

Mingo, who had been sitting there in almost impolite listlessness, looked up and blushing deeply hurriedly asked: "Who is the lady, why was she there?"

"She's a lady," explained Peter Hase, "who testified that Herr Deruga, during those fateful October days, was with her, hence he could not have carried out the act he was suspected of committing." The writer spoke guardedly as he thought the subject unsuitable for relaxed conversation, and most especially considered it totally unfit for a young lady.

"You see, Mama," Mingo cried triumphantly, "But who is this lady with whom he stayed so long? Is he friends with her?"

"Well, it's simply that unmarried men have relationships with certain women, lower-class women. For them it takes the place of family life, and they prefer uneducated, undemanding women so they can let themselves go. Men have a vital need to let themselves go."

"I'd like to call it one of nature's protective devices," said Peter Hase, "which is particularly necessary for cultured men as a relaxation of their otherwise constantly tensed powers. However, there's a tragic interlinkage whereby the cultured man more and more forgets how to let himself go, until his repressed desires at last find release in insanity."

It was clear from the expression on Mingo's face that she had neither understood nor found any interest in what had been said. "What was the woman like?" she asked turning insistently to Peter Hase. "Was she completely uneducated? Was she a poor woman?"

"No, not at all," said Peter Hase earnestly and carefully. "She's the daughter of a caretaker at a boys' grammar school where, it would appear, she was exposed early to questionable influences. Apparently she was seeking, rather touchingly, to hold onto what she took to be her education; whenever possible she laid stress on her love of nature, on all that was good, beautiful and true, as the saying goes, and she spoke pointedly of the friendship that

bound her to Deruga. She was loath to accept the terms 'love' or 'liaison'. I received the impression that she had a need to present her life, as she saw it, as being set against a background of beauty and favour."

The Baroness shrugged her shoulders impatiently, and the Baron tried to steer the conversation in a different direction by saying that similar traits could easily be found among the easygoing women of most nations; he cited all sorts of examples from Japan, China, India and other countries he'd travelled in. He'd got around quite a bit in his youth, he said, but in the end he'd found the best place to be was in Paris.

"Oh, yes, you can more or less always count on it being Paris," said the Baroness, suppressing a sigh, and with a mischievous expression on her face that made her look all the more enchanting.

Peter Hase said that he too loved Paris, and that he'd been on the point of travelling there for a several weeks' stay when Deruga's trial stopped him.

"This Deruga seems to possess an uncommon power to attract," said the Baroness.

Peter Hase glanced discreetly across at Mingo to see how the talk was affecting her. She was looking directly at him, her large eyes signalling her tenseness and commitment.

"One so seldom meets," he said, "within our culture a totally natural person, which is what Deruga is; a child with the attributes and position of an adult."

"Perhaps you're wanting to use him in a novel," mocked the Baroness.

"Hardly," replied Peter Hase gravely. "I'd say he was far too incoherent for a work of fiction, where everything has to have a function, and a contradiction is not allowed."

"'Innocent and Condemned'," the Baroness continued. "Now there's a title that would attract people."

"It won't come to that," Peter Hase calmly assured her. "The whole thing will somehow run into the sand. I infer from Deruga's character that he may well have had colourful affairs, but no great, tragic, shattering experience."

"Do you hear that, Mama?" exclaimed Mingo. "Even Herr Hase is convinced of his innocence. Everyone is. You owe it to yourself to take no more action against him."

"I've already told you," the Baroness broke in, "I'll be speaking with my lawyer. It's really his business, not mine. In point of fact I now regret having been so weak as to let myself be dragged into this affair. It didn't occur to me that his first thought was to use a sensational trial to make a name for himself. He made out that it was my place to bring the crime to light; he used me as a means of becoming famous."

The Baroness had scarcely finished speaking when the waiter announced Dr. Bernburger whom she had asked to come to the hotel for a meeting. "That's awkward," she said after a slight hesitation.

Peter Hase rose from his seat so as not to be in the way. No, she said, in no way was he to leave; for one thing they

hadn't yet had coffee. The truth was she preferred not having to talk with Dr. Bernburger all by herself; anyway, she hated business matters and found this particular one horrid.

As the lawyer entered she greeted him with a haughty nod, supplementing it in a more courteous fashion by remarking with a smile, that he had caught her out. She explained to him that everyone there had been brought up to date and that their presence wouldn't be a nuisance.

Then, looking coldly at him she said: "The affair is developing differently, Herr Doctor, from what you talked me into believing in the beginning."

"I think too highly of the Baroness's character," Dr. Bernburger replied, "ever to dare talking her into anything."

"Well," said the Baroness reluctantly, "at any rate the outline you gave me of what was going to happen was as convincing as ..."

"As you could wish for," chimed in Dr. Bernburger with a smile. "I'm as convinced today of the likely outcomes as I was back then when I first described them to you."

"And the new witness?" asked the Baroness.

"A female in love," said Dr. Bernburger dismissively, "one who would like to perform a service for her beloved. She's not in the least important and she wasn't even sworn in because the court, mindful of her relations with the accused, deemed her untrustworthy from the outset. By the way, it should be possible to get hold of witnesses who can testify to the implausability of her statement."

"No, Mama," cried Mingo, jumping up, clearly indignant. "You're not to have anything to do with it. This spying and hounding is degrading. I can't bear the thought of you being party to it."

Observing the young lady through his glasses Dr. Bernburger gave a smile.

"If the criminal didn't go by shady paths," he said, "one wouldn't need to creep after them along the same routes. It's the criminal's method that determines the very method by which he'll be exposed. If a thief runs off with your purse, and you want it back, you have to run after him; or get someone else to run after him for you."

"I don't ask anyone to do what I can just as well do for myself," said Mingo. "Besides, no one has stolen my purse."

"Don't interfere, child," the Baroness scolded, "in things you know too little about to be able to pass judgement." Then, turning to Dr. Bernburger, she said: "However, I still have the feeling that we are not playing a commendable role in this matter."

"It's the final outcome that counts," said Dr. Bernburger, "and as I've already told you, my conviction had strengthened. It feels to me as if I've experienced the past events at first hand. I could present them in a play."

"Then why don't you do so?" exclaimed the Baroness tetchily. "I believe general opinion is turning in favour of the accused."

"Apparently Dr. Deruga is very successful with women," said Dr. Bernburger. "In their eyes a man is all the more attractive if he's suspected of committing a crime. Moreover, many people make the mistake of believing that criminals must have been specially marked out by nature. They should look rough, violent, nasty, disfigured. It doesn't occur to people that the reason for most crimes is the weakness of the criminal, his inability to sufficiently resist temptation; and what a big part that plays. It wasn't without cause that in earlier times a good many criminals themselves believed that the devil had whispered in their ears."

The Baron thought such ideas were dangerous, in that they came close to taking away one's will to pursue criminals and punish them.

The lawyer gave a shrug. "If we stopped doing that," he said, "we'd only give them more incentive to do things that were evil, or rather forbidden; then all restraints would cease to exist. The best thing probably is for everyone to simply carry out the duties that have been laid down, and to do so with an easy conscience as regards causes and consequences. Councillor Fein brings forth an endless series of defence witnesses; he's now put back into the witness box a professor who for a while lived in the same house as Deruga and his wife. It appears that he is to corroborate what we have known for a long time, namely that Deruga is what they call a 'fine fellow', who may well be one to fly off the handle pretty easily, but who would never commit a premeditated crime. I would be shirking my duty if I weren't endeavouring to get hold of evidence to strengthen our own conviction, and I'm still hoping to be successful in finding something conclusive. I'm following a lead I'd prefer to keep to myself until I'm completely clear about it."

Mingo looked at Dr. Bernburger with unconcealed disgust. "Don't have anything to do with it, Mama," she said in a voice half commanding, half imploring. "It's not your concern."

"Please don't interfere," said the Baroness irritably. "Better you leave us if you can't control yourself! Neither you nor I have a personal interest in the matter, solely an objective one. No one will be better pleased than us when the truth is established."

"Well, I do have a personal interest," exclaimed Minge passionately. "I know he's innocent. Contrary to all the evidence you say you got by spying on him, he's innocent and is better than all of us." Her voice quivered and she was close to tears.

As if to shield the young woman, the Baron and Peter Hase got to their feet simultaneously. The Baron moved beside her and suggested a walk: while the days were still shortening they should make good use of the daylight. Dr. Bernburger had the feeling he'd been dismissed and was in disgrace, laden with contempt. The bitterness seething within him intensified more and more into a vindictive hatred of Deruga, while as regards the Baroness his fervent wish was to prove to her that he was right.

Part thirteen

"We became acquainted with Deruga," declared Professor Vondermühl, "when we occupied the same house. Shortly after the Derugas moved in my wife suffered an attack of stomach cramp and in order to get help for her as quickly as possible I went upstairs and asked Deruga to come down. He showed the utmost kindness and willingness, and his wife offered her assistance as well. From that time onwards we saw a lot of each other and maintained a close friendship, until the Derugas lost their child, and not long afterwards were divorced."

"Did you ever observe any disagreements between husband and wife?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"My wife had the impression that they were truly very fond of each other but were ill-matched. Deruga had, notwithstanding his friendliness, a restless, unpredictable temperament and would have profited from firmer guidance; his wife was unable to provide this, but she was tender and affectionate, a flower, you might say, that should have been growing in the shelter of a wall. Following the death of their child, who had served as a bond between them, their differences became perhaps more clearly evident."

"Did it at any time come to violent outbursts?" asked the Presiding Judge.

"There was one evening," recounted the professor, "when my wife and I were sitting after dinner on our little balcony that went from the living room out over the garden. Directly above, the Derugas' living room door must have been open because we could hear their voices and it sounded as if their conversation was gradually turning into a verbal exchange. We laughed at it and my wife said: 'That dreadful man, his devil's on the loose again'--which was her way of describing certain moods that Deruga was subject to. She suggested we go up and interrupt the row for the wife's sake. I was against it, though, because it seemed to me that meddling in their affairs at that moment was intrusive--and maybe because I was lazy or responding to some such egoistical impulse. We were still in the process of discussing it when we heard Frau Deruga give a muffled cry of what we took to be fear, pain, dread. At that my wife jumped up and without waiting for my consent tore upstairs to the upper floor so fast I had trouble keeping up with her. When I arrived there, out of breath, Ursula, the maid, had already opened the door for my wife and she greeted us, her eyes shining. Perhaps she was glad that her employers weren't alone just then.

"Deruga received us with his usual warmth; there were no signs of embarrassment or discord except now and again he'd repeat hackneyed sayings like 'O marriage! One should think more carefully about marriage than about hanging' and suchlike. My wife, who was very lively and feared no one, railed at him: 'We wives need to be more careful, as, yours, looking back, wasn't when she entrusted herself to such a brute. It's because your wife is too good for you that you kick up a row. You've got a little devil in you that can't bear happiness and harmony, but always has to have about it the stink of brimstone and the racket of hell'. Deruga was quite happy to accept a dressing-down

like that from my wife because he thought it arose out of true friendship; and she, for her part, would always lend an ear to what he had to say by way of defence, in whatever form it took. On this occasion he seemed to regret his show of temper and in a relatively quiet tone of voice he said: "I grant you, my wife is loving and gentle but I curse, damn and detest this softness. If she loved me like she should and could, then for a short she'd hiss at me like a snake and tell me I'm a monster, and be it out of love or hate, wrap herself round me and throttle me. If I were a leprous old woman or a dying dog she would still treat me with the same love and gentleness that sends me into a fury.' The poor woman looked at him, as I well remember, with her eyes opened wide and said in her own angry manner: 'I've just told you, you're a monster!' and we all laughed. He put his arms round her and kept hold of her hand while he explained how that was most definitely untrue."

"You mentioned previously," said the Presiding Judge, "that Frau Deruga had let out a cry. Did you find out if she'd cried out simply out of fear or because her husband had attacked her?"

"It wasn't mentioned," said the professor. "Presumably he'd grabbed her roughly. She was looking pale and distraught. A quarter of an hour later, when we were getting ready to go, my wife asked her if we could now leave her on her own with the 'fiend'. She laughingly replied: 'The volcano has had its eruption for the day.' She spoke in her normal voice and Deruga laughed about it as well. It took my wife ages to get to sleep because to her it had all been so weird. I managed to settle her by telling her that she was taking it all too seriously, and that Deruga's love for his wife had become abundantly apparent just a few hours ago."

"Did you ever get to the bottom of the accused's fits of rage against his wife?" asked the Presiding Judge. "Or was the reason for them, in your opinion, attributable simply to his temperament and to the different natures of the spouses?"

"Occasionally Deruga indicated that he had cause to be jealous, and did in fact refer to a man his wife had been attracted to before she married Deruga. However she couldn't marry the man because he was promised to an older woman. It so happened that the woman died and this appears to have increased his jealousy and his suspicions to such an extent that life with him became far from easy. A good many people were of the opinion that she was seeking a divorce in order to marry the other man, but subsequent events have not borne that out for she's known to have remained single."

"Do you think it possible," asked Dr. Zeunemann, "that her fear of the accused is the deciding factor here? Might he have issued threats against her and the man, in case she married him?"

"I have to say, it's a possibility," said the professor after some thought, "but I can't say anything definite about it. My wife was better informed than me as she was on friendly terms with Frau Deruga and it was just about that time that she spent a lot of time with her. She used to give me all the particulars; however, I haven't retained enough of them to enable me to repeat them here and now. What I do know for certain is that Frau Deruga, for a long time after her divorce, had it in mind to marry the man,

but eventually she abandoned the idea. The man concerned then married somebody else. The marriage is thought to have been an unhappy one and he died several years ago."

Dr. Zeunemann remarked that going by the professor's descriptions it would appear that his wife had more communication with Frau Deruga than he had; by comparison, then, could it be that there was any fellow feeling him and Deruga.

"No, no," said the professor. "That's not how things were. He didn't share my scientific interests, and I'm not one to go speculating and flitting about on profound matters, or playing games with hypotheses and paradoxes, or dreaming up ridiculous things. I was too dull to really appreciate the often grotesque leaps of his intellect. Doubtless they amused me but basically I could tell that what knowledge I had wouldn't take me very far. So for that reason and also because I was very busy, my wife was the one who did more to keep up the friendship, for which, on account of her youth, she was better suited. She was considerably younger than me, but nevertheless had to die before me."

The Presiding Judge asked whether his wife ever mentioned corresponding with Frau Deruga when she'd moved away. The professor replied that although there'd been letters from Frau Deruga, he'd burned them when his wife died lest they fell into unauthorised hands. Before destroying them he had leafed through them and remembered one place where Frau Deruga had written that she was still waiting for the peace and joy she had expected once her marriage was dissolved.

" 'Nowadays I often catch myself,' she wrote, or words to that effect, 'instead of looking forwards to the future as I used to, I stand still and turn and look back. Am I falling into habits of old age? Oh no, how could I even expect to be looking anywhere other than there, where my child was, in the past! For me there is no more future on this earth.' Those words moved me deeply because after my wife died, I myself began to live backwards instead of forwards and that's the reason why they are imprinted in my memory."

"This passage in the letter," said the Presiding Judge, "gives no indication that the deceased was longing to marry a second time and had been held back by her fear of the accused."

"In reference to that, I would like it to be noted," said the professor, "that that wish and that fear could be inferred from different oral or written statements on the part of the deceased. But no matter how many instances of Deruga's bad behaviour back then one may gather, it would still appear to me questionable whether they could be mentioned in connection with a murder committed so many years later. It's true that human actions are a chain whose links a god's eye would be able to follow into infinity; but wouldn't we humans inevitably become bewildered in its labyrinthine branchings?"

The Presiding Judge said nothing but gazed down in front of him as the Prosecutor, adopting a series of sceptical grimaces, rocked his head from side to side.

Then Dr. Zeunemann put his final question to the professor, asking him whether he knew of any other reasons for the

Derugas' divorce that were offered at the time or could still be offered now.

"My wife was aware," said the professor, "that to a certain extent Frau Deruga held her husband responsible for the death of their child, hence her regard for him was one of morbid hatred. In the matter of their child's physical development Deruga is understood to have been in favour of toughening her up regardless, whereas his wife would sooner pamper her. This opposition often gave rise to quarrels. Eventually this sensible wife could not blind herself to the fact that Deruga, in his own way, had loved the child every bit as much as she had, and mourned her loss as deeply she did; and she tried hard to overcome her unjust dislike of him, much to the approval of my wife who urged Frau Deruga forward with all the vivacity that so characterised her. Thus, I cannot believe that this obvious change from excessive distress, though it might have relaxed the situation, had any bearing on her decision to seek a divorce."

The jurists now settled themselves to arguing whether or not to recall Fraulein Schwertfeger, as the Prosecutor proposed, to see if she could reveal anything that could throw light on Frau Swieter's abandoning her planned intention to remarry.

Councillor Fein dismissed the Prosecutor's proposal as superfluous and time-wasting, a view shared by shared by Dr. Zeunemann, who said that numerous examples, no matter what they turned out to be, might still be gathered that pointed to mental instability; however, what was required here was not to investigate the history of the accused's mind but to determine the history of his life from the first to the third of October last. In that regard, Fraulein Schwertfeger had nothing of any relevance to offer.

"I entreat the gentlemen," said Councillor Fein, "to stick to the facts, lest we make the knot more confusing instead of undoing it."

"What facts?" asked the Prosecutor, springing from his seat so suddenly that the Councillor had no answer ready.

"Facts that relate to the alleged murder," he answered after a pause. "Due to the lack of facts, all manner of banalities with be hauled here and exaggerated. Lovers groom the object of their love with threats of death should they ever be unfaithful, but without the love object or anyone else taking it seriously, so that what we're discussing has no more significance than lovers' vows."

"It depends on what ensues," said the Prosecutor. "We would prefer to have all the facts in the palm of our hands; however, seeing as how the accused has not provided us with them, there's nothing left for us to do, except search the ground from which deeds grow, in other words: human nature."

"And wasn't the accused been providing us with them?" began the Councillor.

Dr. Zeunemann took the initiative and demanding that the fruitless arguing cease, he invited Fraulein Schwertfeger to satisfy the court's wishes by answering a few more questions.

Fraulein Schwertfeger, looking paler and more miserable than she had the first day, dropped the invisible visor from her face, asking as she came forward if she was obliged to make public things that were completely private. She couldn't imagine it being so.

"In the eyes of the state, matters private and matters public are linked together in one continuous whole," Dr. Zeunemann gently informed her. "Thus, I require from you, only insofar as there is a public concern, a few more pieces of information concerning the circumstances of your late friend. Before her marriage to the accused, Frau Swieter had a friendly relationship with a man which she broke off since, as a wife, she could not allow it to continue, and throughout her marriage it is unlikely that it was restored."

"Of course not," said Fraulein Schwertfeger haughtily, "they only saw each other again when Frau Swieter moved back here."

"And their mutual attraction revived and the reunited pair decided to get married, did they not?"

"Yes," Fraulein Schwertfeger answered flatly.

"What caused this decision not to be implemented?" Dr. Zeunemann continued. "It can't be possible that you, the deceased's best friend, weren't told."

"It wasn't in my friend's nature to give account of her doings down to the last detail," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, "and it isn't in my own nature to want to extract them. At that time my friend was very agitated and would say things that for her sounded odd. Once she told me in tears that her old love was as strong as ever and she wanted to throw herself into the arms of her beloved but her husband with the hand of their child in his stood between them and this shadow in her imagination was as impenetrable as a wall."

"Did you take that to mean," asked Dr. Zeunemann, "that she went in fear of her husband's revenge, or that the memory thrust itself between her and a new happiness?"

"What I understood it to mean at the time," came the answer, "was that Dr. Deruga was to blame for my friend not marrying the man she loved. I was very, very sorry that the wedding didn't take place. I knew the man better than I knew Dr. Deruga and I had a lot more time for him, which is why I believed my friend would be happy with him."

"If you knew the man well," said Dr. Zeunemann, "then perhaps you talked about it with him and knew how he viewed it?"

"He understood it to mean," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, showing a great deal of anger in her face, "that Frau Swieter was frightened that Dr. Deruga would kill him if he married her. She couldn't possibly have told him this because it would only have made him less dismayed than knowing that Dr. Deruga still occupied part of her emotional life. But then it's possible he would have wanted to believe that because it wounded his pride all the less. He was proud and domineering."

"If your friend was so much in love with the man," said Dr. Zeunemann, "then it must have been a strong motive to keep her from marrying him."

"Naturally," said Fraulein Schwertfeger. "It cost her a lot of suffering. However, she overcame it relatively quickly, and afterwards she always said she believed she'd done the right thing."

Part fourteen

Evening had fallen by the time a weary Dr. Bernburger reached his apartment.

He threw himself onto the shabby divan which had already done many years service when he bought it. Shivering he looked about for anything he could put round him. It was colder indoors than outside, but apart from the fact of an evening he would economise on the heating whenever he could, he felt too worn out and listless to bother.

Disgruntled he looked round the bare room which reminded him of a room in some second-class hotel and wondered how and wherefrom he'd got this desire of his for beautiful, comfortable surroundings, a desire which he was perhaps incapable of ever satisfying. To escape his discontent and to get himself warm he decided on an inexpensive restaurant.

But as he was leaving he discovered, in front of the glass door to his apartment, a small wrinkled woman, who had been there for a while, searching for the bell. She asked him if a lawyer lived there.

Yes, and it was him, Dr. Bernburger informed her, but he was finished for the day, she should come back tomorrow during his office hours. The little woman let him know that she had to attend to ladies and gents washing; her husband had left her and she had the children to bring up. She'd just now come from work, in fact it was Herr Tonepohl in Vorderen Anger who had sent her here.

At the mention of the name a thought ran through the lawyer's mind that brought blood rushing to his face and caused him to go back into his room with the little woman. Seeing to the light he asked her to take a seat and to tell him what it was that had brought her, but when he'd finished he found her still standing, diffident as before, at the door. He actually had to lead her to a chair before relieving her of the large covered basket she was carrying. She thanked him with an embarrassed smile and then began her story:

The day before yesterday she'd gone to Herr Tonepohl's, the junk dealer in Vorderen Anger to buy a pair of shoes for her eldest boy and there was one pair in particular she liked because they were more or less the right size, but they were too dear. So she told Herr Tonepohl that she had a workman's coat that had belonged to her dear departed husband--she always referred to him as her 'dear departed', you see, because he'd up and left--that looked good as new and she'd asked the dealer if he would say no to a swap. Herr Tonepohl (who had told her bluntly that he had no time at all for poor folk) said that he had no call for ragged

items, at which his wife, who had been poking about in an old suitcase, shouted at him not to be such an old fool , the lawyer had promised him a lot of money for a workman's coat and he, her husband, had said definitely that he'd have a look around and now it was plain what a windbag he was. That had Herr Tonepohl cursing and he told her she was dumber than a herring. The legal gentleman would throw the workcoat back in his face because he wanted one that had been found in the street. Now, don't you see, the old workman's coat she'd meant hadn't really come from her dear departed husband, she'd found it, and it was only because of Herr Tonepohl's rudeness that she hadn't mentioned it in case he created a fuss and made out that she'd stolen it.

On her way out she'd stopped at the door and had a few words with Frau Tonepohl. She asked Frau Tönepöhl what this lawyer was like, and Frau Tonepohl told her, she even let her know that it was all to do with a big trial and that there was a tidy sum waiting for anyone who could bring him the right article. She'd worried about taking him the coat but then she told herself for goodness sake he won't harm her, she won't cause a disaster, she'd come simply because it mattered to him.

Yes, indeed, Dr.Bernburger assured her, he was very grateful to her and whether he could use the coat or not he would recompense her for her trouble. She was a good little woman; could he ask her to describe really carefully how she came by the article.

It had been the third of October, she told him, and how she came to remember it so clearly was because it was the morning she'd had to leave the house before five. Commercial Councillor Steinhager's wife, you see, had asked her to come an hour earlier than usual and stay on one or two hours longer so that she just might get all the washing seen to in one day as they were expecting an out of town visitor the day after and this had put the washing routine right out of kilter. Seeing as how Frau Commercial Councillor Steinhager was good to work for, she'd promised her she would, so before five o'clock that morning, when there wasn't a soul about, she'd already gone through the station grounds. There was a strong wind blowing, enough to make the tall trees bend and set dry leaves flying round her head like bats.

Buffeted by the wind she'd had to stop for a moment when she reached the bridge, and it was from there that she spotted something black about a hundred paces along the bank. She'd thought at first it was a child or a dog because it had what she took to be arms or legs outstretched, so she rushed towards it. But instead, all it was was some piece of clothing tied up with string. Apparently it had a paper wrapping but the water for the most part had dissolved it and torn it away. She'd untied the article and wrung it out, and decided she'd take it with her. Well, whoever it had belonged to had thrown it away, so it wasn't illegal, and perhaps her dear departed husband could do with it, if he ever returned, or, if not, her eldest boy when he'd grown up. Did the legal gentleman think she'd done wrong? She looked at him, her brown eyes burning with curiosity and shining out from her shrivelled face like two little nightlights.

Oh no, Dr.Bernburger had assured her, many a rich and respected man would be glad to have nothing more than that

on his conscience. It came under 'abandoned goods'. She'd done the right thing, she was an honest little woman. No doubt she had the coat with her in her basket?

Yes, the little woman had said, relieved, she'd brought it with her so she wouldn't need to come again. It would mean a long detour, and as usual that evening the children would be getting impatient waiting for her to get home.

She took the package out of the basket and Dr.Bernburger unfolded the work coat.

"Do you know," he said, "I'll buy this article from you whether its the right one or not. Will you be satisfied if I give you ten marks for the time being? You'll get more if it turns out to be the one I'm searching for."

The little woman turned red with startled joy. Now she could buy her eldest those lovely shoes, she said.

But she was to say nothing to Herr Tonepohl about their arrangement, Dr.Bernburger called after her down the stairs, he need know nothing about it.

Hotly elated and almost blind with triumph Dr.Bernburger went back into the room, oblivious of its cold and emptiness. So, his brainwave had proved correct, and this was one occasion when his luck and his reasoning had converged! How amazed everyone would be when he presented his exhibit and showed them he'd solved the riddle for them in one fell swoop. How could there possibly be room for doubt?

There was likely to be some kind of tag on the work coat which would help determine where it had been bought. A thorough examination of the coat drew a blank, but it was clearly of good quality and had been bought new, despite the patches that had been deliberately tacked on to give the appearance of a miserable, worn out piece of workmen's clothing.

Turning the work coat around Dr.Bernburger discovered a buttoned-up side pocket. He opened it, reached inside and withdrew an envelope bearing an address somewhat smudged by the wetness but still legible. He read: 'to Dr.S.E.Deruga' then the city and street. Even though the letter simply confirmed what he had expected, he was not only surprised, he was almost frightened. Petrified he stared at the letter which lay there like a delusion on the part of a powerfully excited imagination, and yet all the time it was real, the magic key that would open for him the gate to eminence and wealth. He could feel a letter inside the envelope, nevertheless he hesitated to take it out and read it. The pounding of his heart irritated him. But whatever was he so worked up about? He put an end to the awful tension by reading the letter. It said:

'Dodo, dear Dodo, I am seriously ill and there is no hope, but before I die I shall have to suffer terribly and I have no one to help me. You are the only one who loves me enough to kill me. Come and free your poor Marmotte. You know how terrified she is of pain. These are the first words I've sent you in seventeen years, and it is a plea. Oh Dodo, I would not dare direct this at anyone's heart but yours. Come soon, you will know how it can be done. Nobody will find out that I have written to you.'

Your Marmotte.'

Dr.Bernburger read and reread the words. Suddenly he was beset by feelings of weariness and disillusion. Was the letter bogus, some devilish device concocted after the death that Deruga or his lady friend had meant him to find? After careful examination and assessment he ruled out any question of fraud. He returned the letter to the envelope which he put into his breast pocket. He then gathered his hat and coat and set off for his customary eating-place of an evening. When he was but a few steps away he turned around and went looking for an alternative establishment in order to avoid being accosted by people he was acquainted with; he could tell his mind was elsewhere and he had no desire to attract attention.

All the time he was eating the thought kept recurring that there was nothing to prevent him throwing the letter into the little iron stove that was burning close by. The eager flames would have destroyed the fateful piece of evidence in a trice. He had no intention of doing so but his mental picture of it was so vivid that he nevertheless felt a compulsion, in very much the same way that an attack of dizziness can induce perversely a fear of throwing of throwing oneself from a great height into the abyss down below.

How stupid, he thought, to have given the old woman ten Marks, only to land himself in such a predicament. Would he be able to reconcile himself to making use of the work coat but not the letter? Were he to do that he could be sure of receiving the Baroness's admiration and gratitude. How satisfying it would be to convince her of his astuteness, of the accuracy of his perception, both of which he'd had from the start!

On the other hand what would she say if he showed her the letter: "You promised me you'd expose Deruga as a criminal and here they are putting him on a pedestal. You certainly know how to keep your word."

She'd likely forbid him using the letter; and when all said and done that was the ideal solution for him, making him duty-bound to do what he would have been reluctant to do of his own accord.

And what would Deruga's reaction be? Dr.Bernburger couldn't understand why he'd kept silent about the real cause of events. Had he also kept his lawyer in the dark? He was suddenly overcome with the desire to go to where the washerwoman claimed she'd found the coat; he wouldn't stay in the restaurant a moment longer, and it was hardly worth going back to his apartment and trying to sleep.

It took him nearly an hour to walk to the bridge that crossed the canal. Last night's snow had melted and turned into mud which in the darkness he could hear squelch under his feet. The wooden bridge was slippery and the water whose level was now very high sped away beneath him without a sound.

After a while he was able to make out further along the water's edge a mass of roots protruding in an unruly fashion and anchoring an old elm tree to the bank. It could

well be the place where the package, carried along by the flow, had got caught. For a long time the latenight wanderer stared at the spot; he then continued a short distance until he found himself in front of a semicircular stone bench which in better times of the year offered a pleasant view across the meadows and between the dark bushes further still. Perhaps, he thought, Deruga, after changing his clothes, had sat there that stormy October night, counting the hours to the time when a train would take him home. Perhaps he was very emotional as well as tired and had rested here where no one could see him.

Instinctively Dr. Bernburger too waded through the sodden earth and sat on the stone bench without noticing it was wet. What would Deruga have been feeling, what would he have been thinking about, having seen one more time the woman he had in the past loved and hated and was now gone from him for ever? What memories would have accompanied the rustling leaves whirling round him? While he pondered thus, cold drops fell on him and a shiver ran up and down his spine. He got to his feet and without looking about him walked quickly back to the city.

Part fifteen

Next morning Dr. Bernburger looked and felt weary enough to excuse himself on grounds of sickness, and, having done so over the phone, returned to his bed in the hope of being able to fall asleep again.

He was wakened by the telephone ringing. He felt tired almost immediately and decided to pretend it had nothing to do with him. But when it rang a second time he got out of bed with a sigh and answered. Straightaway he recognised the Baroness's voice which on the telephone sounded a touch shrill. ""

"Are you ill?" she asked: now that was awkward in the extreme; she was on the point of going away and it was necessary, especially now, that he be at his post in person.

Bernburger told her that he found no enjoyment in being ill. To which the Baroness replied that the illness couldn't be so bad that he couldn't come to the hotel for a quarter of an hour. At all accounts, she had to see him before she set off.

Bernburger said he was sorry but he was keeping to his bed.

"But, Doctor, you're on the telephone," said the Baroness laughingly, and he knew how seductive that sound could be.

"Then I'll come, for heavens sake," he shouted, cross both

with her and himself.

"That's good, Doctor," her voice answered. "You can take a taxi, can't you."

"You don't look at all ill, Doctor," said the Baroness by way of a greeting. "My husband and I have suddenly decided to go to Paris," she continued. "This dreadful trial, as I've already mentioned to you, has so greatly affected me."

"Your daughter's comments," Dr. Bernburger stated boldly, "must aggravate you."

The Baroness blushed. "You know," she said, "that I don't let my actions be influenced by the judgement of youth. My daughter will be accompanying us."

"Your change of residence is much to be envied," said Dr. Bernburger.

"Yes, spring in Germany is unbearable," said the Baroness. "Perhaps its precisely why its so particularly highly praised by our German poets; one always praises what one doesn't know well."

"It follows then that the secret of being happily married is never getting to know each other," Dr. Bernburger retorted, adding as a self rebuke: "but I see that my weakness is making me confused and garrulous. What did the baroness wish to say to me?"

"I wanted to urge you to devote your heart and mind to the trial," she said. "The last time we saw each other I'd begun to waver--a consequence of my foolishness in being in the courtroom, I see that now. The mass of details, the changing testimonies, all the strong impressions make one nervous when one's not used to it. What I want now is for the trial to run its course and to await the result without having to worry about it. May justice be done: that's what lawyers and judges are there for."

"Absolutely," said Dr. Bernburger.

"I can rely on you, can't I?" she asked. "Your illness won't drag on? I would be very grateful if you would give me a report from time to time. You did say last time you were hoping to make a vital discovery."

At those words Dr. Bernburger, who had been looking fixedly at the Baroness, pulled himself together. "Unfortunately," he ejaculated somewhat forcefully, "I have to inform you that I see myself compelled to resign from representing your affairs."

The initial reaction of the Baroness to this unexpected announcement was a rush of indignation and outrage so strong that she was robbed of her power to reply. Finally, with a cold penetrating look coming into her eyes she exclaimed: "That is unheard of. That is impossible. What you're wanting to do is to withdraw from the awkward situation you've involved me in. But I'm not releasing you. This illness of yours is just a pretext. I saw through it rightaway. This is your first dishonourable step towards

leaving us in the lurch, us, me."

Dr.Bernburger went pale, but with his determination increasing, he remained calm. "Actually I do feel ill," he said, "and I'm no longer up to the task. It's for your sake I'm wanting to resign."

"I thank you for your thoughtful sacrifice," mocked the Baroness, "but I'm not accepting it. I trust you despite your illness."

Meanwhile, in the next room, the shrill, agitated voice of the Baroness had aroused her daughter Mingo's attention. She came through and in surprise gazed questioningly at the quarrellers. Without Dr.Berburger realising it Mingo's presence in the room instilled courage into the young lawyer.

"When I'm able to inform you as to the name and nature of my illness, Baroness," he said, "you will understand me better. It resides in my being otherwise convinced."

"So suddenly?" asked the Baroness. "Just two or three days ago you were talking quite differently."

"It can happen," said Dr.Bernburger, "all of a sudden one's eyes are opened."

He had yet to explain himself when Mingo grasped his hot moist hand which hitherto she had avoided touching, and exclaimed: "Oh, Doctor, tell us everything! I thank you, and Mama is just as grateful as I am, even if she won't acknowledge it right now! How good you are to admit your mistake!"

She kept a tight, passionate hold of his hand, her eyes were filled with tears and her lips trembled. The tension in the baroness's face relaxed, though she made an effort to maintain her reserve and superiority.

"Be honest with me, Doctor," she said with a modicum of sternness, "I may at least ask that of you. Is your change of mind founded on psychic impressions, or on new facts that you have ascertained?"

Only now did she motion him to sit down and then, when he made for an ordinary chair with smiling allusion she offered him an armchair. "And you must have a glass of wine," she added with a glance towards Mingo hinting that she should ring for a servant. "You really do look unwell. I think I was too hard on you earlier, but with your evasions and doubts you've only yourself to blame. If you take into account the low opinion you had of me, I don't think there's anything now that you can blame me for."

When Dr.Bernburger finished his story, Mingo's pale face was streaming with tears which she made no effort to conceal. She couldn't speak. Her mother gave no signs of being moved.

"Tell me, Doctor, in what way has the situation been altered by your discovery?"

"The situation is altered only if you want it so," said Dr.

Bernburger. "If it's your wish that I say nothing of my discovery then I'm duty bound to follow your instructions."

"Of course that's out of the question," the Baroness swiftly exclaimed. "I've never wished for anything other than that a crime be expiated. What Dr.Deruga did I took to be more an act of great kindness. However, I don't know how the courts view it."

"Thanks to the letter," the lawyer explained, "it has been established unconditionally that Dr.Deruga killed his divorced wife at her request and his action duly falls under the heading entitled 'Assisted suicide'. Presumably he'll be sentenced to a few years in prison. Even if he is acquitted, baroness, an attempt on your part to contest the inheritance has very little chance of success."

For a brief moment the Baroness's face went a deep red. "That's no longer under discussion," she said with a dismissive flick of her hand. "I now understand perfectly. Everything I did was based on a complete misjudgement of the circumstances. I must thank you, my dear Doctor, for your eagerness in enabling me to see my mistake just in time." She stretched out her hand, which he put to his lips.

Mingo was still not able to speak. It was not until after Dr.Bernburger that she flung herself around her mother's neck and cried: "What a good man Bernburger turns out to be! I've done him such an injustice! And what beautiful eyes he has behind those glasses!"

The Baroness gave Mingo a kiss on her forehead. "Pretty-pretty eyes, fine, it's just that they're behind glasses."

Part sixteen

Dr.Zeunemann opened the next session with a surprising announcement. Dr.Bernburger, who had been given the task by Baroness Truschkowitz of making enquiries into her cousin's death, had gathered a number of facts of such a nature as to give a significant turn to the direction of the trial.

This unexpected event even shocked Deruga out of his hitherto undisguised drowsiness. His muscles automatically tightened as if for a fight as Dr.Bernburger stepped forward. Here was a man to be wary of: before any one knew it, he'd be mounting a treacherous attack.

"Your Honours, and Gentlemen of the Jury," Dr.Bernburger began, "I have made an important discovery that I don't believe I should keep from you an hour longer, because it can, at a stroke, set the sombre case that is before you in a clear light. Gentlemen, I proceeded in my enquiries under the conviction that Deruga must have committed the murder of Frau Swieter because in the first place he was the only one to have had an interest in her death, and secondly he was the only one whose fate was closely intertwined and in a tragic way with hers; it seemed to me, then, that without the compliance of Frau Swieter, or her maid, or both of

them, no one would have been able to gain entry into the apartment.

"This opinion of mine was strengthened by the testimonies of the witnesses and altered insofar as I disregarded that of the maid and looked upon Frau Swieter alone as the person who had let the murderer in.

"I imagined the course of events to have been that either Frau Swieter had rung her divorced husband to say goodbye to him, or else, what I think more likely, that he'd called on her to ask for money, and that some unforeseen development in their conversation had made him into a murderer.

"The explanation in both cases could be found in the special relationship that had existed between them, as well as by Deruga's uncontrollable temperament. I expect he'd called at the apartment or had alerted Frau Swieter of his presence by some signal or other that was familiar to both of them from years back. All he need do was to call her name under her window, or sing a little tune they both knew well. When the trustworthy Ursula told us about the Slovak who had rung the doorbell around midday and then disappeared, I was certain it had been Deruga. I imagined he'd been somewhere in the house, in the basement perhaps, waiting for Ursula to leave; then Frau Swieter had let him in, and he'd left shortly before Ursula was expected to return.

"As he was making for the garden gate, he encountered the caretaker who looked at him with some curiosity, and it was simply the man's presence that made him fully aware of the crime he had committed and the danger he was in should it be discovered. He wanted to appear natural and the best thing he could think of was to take a cigarette out of his pocket and ask: 'Got a light, Your Worship?' Actually he was on no mood to smoke and too worked up, and he didn't know how to act in the situation., hence he became careless and threw the cigarette he'd just lit into the bushes by the garden gate."

The rapt audience followed the account as if they were hearing it all for the first time. Attention was split between Dr. Bernburger and Deruga, who no longer thought of withdrawing his face from view by hiding it behind his hand, as had been his practice.

"My conviction that the Slovak had to be Deruga," Dr. Bernburger continued, "was so strong that I'm able to say I knew it. I now retraced his steps from the time he purchased the rail-ticket at the station in Prague, as has already been established. He was wearing his usual clothes, possibly a frock-coat, because if he'd left his apartment in the workman's coat it would have been conspicuous and would have been noted; he had the workman's coat with him in the package.

"The question now was, where had he changed his clothes? Was it on the train? Somewhere in the station? Or what about at night in the open? He'd have had to chose a place where he could not only change his clothes, but where he could leave his proper ones behind and could find them again and swap them back. He had either taken the workman's

coat with him in the package, or, more probably, had thrown it away on the journey or had hidden it. If the latter were the case then someone could have found the coat and sold it to a secondhand clothes dealer., and although there was only a faint possibility that a search for it would be successful, I took the trouble to enquire at a good number of shops of that kind.

"I received no information that was of any use and had already given up hope of picking up any clues in this way, when an old woman showed up at my apartment. By chance she'd got to know of my wish for information when she'd been in one of the shops. It turned out that on the morning of the third of October, soon after five o'clock, this woman, a washerwoman had been going through the grounds of the railway station when, happening to look down from the bridge that goes over the canal, she saw a dark object in the water which at first she took to be something living. When she had a closer look she discovered it to be an article of clothing such as workmen wear; it was clinging to the root of a tree and after wringing it out she took it--its being 'abandoned goods'-- away with her."

With these words Dr.Bernburger approached the table and deposited the package he'd been carrying under his arm. He unwrapped it and spread out the contents which he and the judges who had left their seats, bent over.

"The workcoat," continued Dr.Bernburger would have only been a clue; I was provided with proof that it belonged to the accused by a letter I found in a buttoned up side pocket, Despite the blurs here and there it's perfectly legible and I ask permission to be allowed to read it."

In the course of his report the narrator increasingly betrayed his excitement. His voice cracked a number of times as he read the letter and when he finally laid it down his hands were trembling.

"My word!"

With this expression of astonishment Councillor Fein was the first to break the silence that had descended on the room.

Meanwhile Dr.Zeunemann had seized the letter, held it close to his face, carefully checked the handwriting, and the postmark, and the paper before asking: "But how could it have been sent? To know how," he added, "perhaps Fraulein Schwertfeger will tell us."

After a fresh pause the Presiding Judge turned slowly towards Deruga and asked him if he had anything to comment on regarding Dr.Bernburger's statement. Without looking up or saying a word Deruga shook his head.

"We would very much like to hear you confirm," said Dr.Zeunemann, beginning anew, "that Dr.Bernburger's account is accurate, or that it needs correcting."

However, before he'd got to the end of his sentence, the Public Prosecutor attempted to interrupt him by gesticulating with his long arms and pointing to Deruga.

"Honourable colleague," he said, "can't you see the man is ill? Let him be, it's too much for him. A glass of water. Quickly!" He signalled to the nearest court usher, urging him with threatening looks to hurry.

Meantime Councillor Fein, listening to what Deruga was saying, had laid an arm round his shoulder. Then he turned towards the judges' table and said: "My client is feeling unwell and asks permission to be allowed to retire. Tomorrow he will give you all the information you desire."

The two of them left the courtroom together and when they were outside the Councillor said: "Listen, Doctor, for the first time in my life I'm beginning to feel a perfect swine."

"So be glad," replied Deruga with one of his winning smiles. "At your age it could easily be the tenth or hundredth time. By the way, you were quite right: humans are feeble, stupid animals. Why should you have believed me?"

The Councillor shook his head. "An old practitioner like me," he said, "should be able to tell the difference. But I took to you, Deruga, right from the start. I hope you noticed."

"Yes, I did," said Deruga, "although at the same time you thought me a miserable cur."

The Councillor surveyed him with a loving glance. "You look in a bad way. Let's go drink a bottle of wine together!"

Deruga excused himself on account of a bad headache. "I don't know why I came over so weak!" he said. "I think it was feeling of how this man had been creeping after me step by step."

"Actually," said the Councillor, reminding himself, "I think I did that rascal an injustice. He behaved like a decent chap."

"Pity! ... No?" said Deruga, whereupon they parted.

Inside the courthouse lawyers from the trial were clustered round Dr. Bernburger quizzing him about various details. For the third time the Public Prosecutor shook both of Bernburger's hands and praised him for his zeal. The Prosecutor's hair was dishevelled and his pale eyes gleamed moistly beneath his foxtail eyebrows.

"They say I'm strict," he said, "and so I am, and so I shall remain. But when it comes to this Italian, one can afford to be human for once. He's a stout fellow, through and through. No nastiness. That's what I like about him."

"And you," said Dr. Zeunemann, "a prosecutor through and through. No nastiness with you either? That's maybe even harder."

"What is rarer, beauty in costume or beauty stark naked?" said the Prosecutor thoughtfully. "Well I don't want by any means to strip off the costume completely, but rather to be juridically human by ignoring all the facts supplied by Dr.Bernburger and, as if nothing had happened, stick to the original charge of manslaughter."

"Excellent, excellent," said Dr.Bernburger, "otherwise I'd have ended by doing him a disservice."

"In that way Fein's plan worked," said Dr.Zeunemann, "but as things stand I do find something arbitrary in the situation."

"How so, my good friend?" the Prosecutor called out heartily. "How then do things stand? We know that the good Frau Swieter wished to shorten her suffering through death, that she asked her divorced husband to do this service for her and that Deruga killed her as a result. But then do we know that he did it out of compassion? Or that he didn't have a selfish objective? Do we know that for a long time he'd been wishing her dead, or that he didn't rejoice when he received the letter asking him to grant her wish? It would be the first time something like this had happened. Just bear in mind the speed with which he undertook this dangerous task! Apparently he had the poison there already prepared."

"Stop!" interrupted Dr.Zeunemann with a laugh. "If you carry on you'll be raising the charge to murder."

"Legally," said the Prosecutor thoughtfully, "it would perhaps be more correct, but I have resolved to judge humanely, and besides, I'd run the danger, I believe, of being torn apart by the Maenads if I were to attack their darling."

"Alternatively you'll be torn apart out of gratitude," observed Dr.Zeunemann. "It's just your lot to be the victim of women."

Part seventeen

That same afternoon the Baroness called at the house where Deruga was staying, and was admitted. He got up from the uncomfortable sofa he'd been lying and sleeping on, and blinked morosely at the light.

"Dear Doctor," she said, holding out her hand to him, "I'm come to receive your forgiveness. God himself forgives the repentant sinner. You can't be more merciless than He."

"I don't see myself as being comparable with God," said Deruga, "but it doesn't matter as I've nothing to forgive you. You weren't persecuting me, you were standing up for what you supposed was justice."

"You're avoiding making peace," said the Baroness. "I perfectly understand; but I'm not letting you off so easily. One can probably even tolerate hatred and still

worse from a man who can love like you. What woman wouldn't sacrifice everything she had to be loved as you have loved."

"In all honesty!" exclaimed Deruga. "Coming from you I think it's saying a lot."

"That sounds spiteful," said the Baroness, "but it doesn't hurt me because I feel you don't mean it to be nasty. True enough, I didn't know how I could live without money, without rather a lot of money. My God, everyone is used to certain things. But I'm not greedy. Money by itself is not important to me. And do you know why I was so beside myself when I learned the inheritance wasn't coming to me? I was bent on having the money, I won't lie, and to you and you only I'll say why. I had become indescribably bored in my marriage."

"Yes, boredom is the greatest problem in life, and the greatest danger," said Deruga, "but your husband appears to be a thoroughly nice, kind person."

"Of course," agreed the Baroness, "one can't imagine anyone more pleasant. He's like pure air: you wouldn't even notice he was there, and when I married him I persuaded myself that I was a little in love with him. But I was so bored in his company I could easily have been unfaithful if I'd been able to reconcile it with my principles. It's the one principle I hold to, and it's what I've done."

"You do have a daughter, though," countered Deruga.

"I suspect she finds life at home as boring as I do," said the Baroness. "She's grown up now and might well have been company for me but she seizes every opportunity to get away from home. In the meantime I've passed the time planning my future: I would dispense with my husband as soon as my daughter was taken care of, by that I mean married."

Deruga's face was a picture of total astonishment. "Do you still have it in mind to get divorced?" he asked.

A lovely smile that made her look young flickered across the Baroness's face. "At my age, do you mean? As long as I have the desire to be young, it will do."

"So then you're wanting to marry a man who's more amusing?" asked Deruga.

"Oh, marry!" she repeated. "No, that doesn't matter to me, nor does a legal separation; all that matters is being free and putting that atmosphere of boredom behind me."

Deruga shrugged. "Basically the same climate holds sway over the entire earth," he said.

"No, no," she exclaimed vivaciously, "I can't imagine, for example, how anyone would ever be bored in your company!"

Like a child she had such an artless way of uttering things that were naive, that even Deruga, who considered himself a connoisseur of women, couldn't say what was artificial and what was real. "There's also a reverse side to that," he answered good-naturedly. "You may recall the lines poor Marmotte inscribed in a book:

'Deruga, you are just as

Beautiful as you are strange;

One can't live without you

And one can't live with you.'"

The Baroness's face reddened slightly, but, nevertheless, she was able to say with reasonable objectivity: "Well, yes, when I think of the all the daily rubbing-eachother-the-wrong way that marriage entails, to tell you the truth I probably wouldn't willingly take it on again, and I consider it mean and destructive. But now," she added, getting to her feet, "I don't want to leave without your conciliatory handshake!"

"Gladly, Baroness," he said, holding out his hand. "You've already had your punishment: the money eluded you."

"Yes, the money," she said wistfully, "that was going to open my suitcase. We've been over that; I was unable to do what I wanted for the simple reason that I was in the position of having no fortune of my own and no knowledge of what I could live off if I left my husband. The inheritance from my poor sick cousin was supposed to give me a new life. But enough of me! For the time you'll be here, would you let me brighten up this room for you with some flowers?"

"If it will give you pleasure," he said.

Hesitating on the threshold she let her eyes rest on his brown well-shaped hand that she was still holding. Then with a smile she went.

Travelling along the somewhat gloomy outlying street she felt as if she had never before in the whole of her life experienced such a glow of excitement. She could feel a tingling that was both frightening and pleasing and which, so it appeared to her, enhanced all her strengths and ennobled them. A tiny bit more, though, and she might feel uneasy. Already a slight feeling of anxiety had slipped under her guard, engulfing the great delight of the general turmoil.

The Baroness decided she would take a walk. It wasn't late yet, the lights along the street and in the shop windows eventually came on and blazed like flame-yellow tulips into the confusion of pale twilight colours. Smiling she walked slowly and aimlessly on.

How delightful it was to feel so young and to be going down a forbidden path like a girl in love! It was almost as if she were going to a rendezvous. Passing a florist's shop that had the look of some ostentatious primeval forest it occurred to her to choose something for Deruga's room. She took her time making her selection and ignored the prices which normally, especially when it concerned a gift, she would not have overlooked.

By chance she caught sight of her figure in a mirror: slim, faultless, a study in natural elegance. A joyful feeling of happiness and pride shot through her. She may not have been some fresh flower glittering with morning dew, but the absence of lustre and dazzling colour was more than made up for by the figure she had just seen and by her perfume, both of which came into their own at nightfall. She felt she still had the power to attract and to enchant; and shouldn't she herself be capable of loving? She had never been in love.

She struggled within herself over whether or not she should go the the next morning's session because he might well

disapprove and find it somewhat tasteless and demeaning if she were now to return to the seat she had previously occupied spurred on by curiosity and an impatient desire to see her case triumph.

Yet it was impossible for her to resist the urge to be wherever Deruga was, be it only to know for certain how matters stood with him. "If one has done wrong," she had told her husband and daughter at breakfast, "then one has to make up for it by putting it right. I don't want to go to Paris before I know what's to become of Deruga, and how we might be able to do something for him."

The Baron was of the same mind, and Mingo's face flushed with joy.

"Mama, dear," she said, "I'm so glad you're a good person after all."

"Really, Mingo," said the Baroness disapprovingly, though she could scarcely refrain from laughing.

"May I go with you, Mama?" Mingo asked after she'd jumped up and embraced her mother. "You know what suffering it has caused me. I'd like to be there too, now that it has turned out so well. Surely he'll be acquitted?"

"There's little doubt of that," said the Baron as the Baroness detached herself from Mingo's embrace and tried to suppress an uncomfortable feeling of jealousy that suddenly arose within her. She cast a swift searching look over Mingo whose existence she immediately felt to be a check and hindrance to her. But what the girl wanted, she told herself, was to study, and it was right and proper that she should want to work hard to improve herself. The touch of her fresh lips was inexpressibly sweet. The Baroness laid her hand caressingly under her daughter's face that look like a child's and said: "I'll be sure to let Dr. Deruga know that you've been his steadfast little knight right from the start."

Pride shone from Mingo. "And I won't sheath my sword until he's free," she said.

Part eighteen

The following day when the first witness, Fraulein Gundel Schwertfeger, was called the public's impatience was still intense. The Presiding Judge read out to her the letter from the late Frau Swieter and asked her if she had known about it.

"Yes," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, barely giving it a fleeting look, "it's the same one I posted for her a few days before her death."

Dr. Zeunemann cleared his throat, and looking straight ahead onto the table in front of him he said: "You withheld that from us at the start of the trial."

"No, I didn't withhold it, I lied," said Fraulein Schwertfeger, courageously defiant, her grey eyes darkening. "It was the first time in my life and I couldn't help doing

it because if I didn't I would have broken my word to my dead friend."

"Are you perhaps willing now," said Dr. Zeunemann softly, "to tell us briefly what was going on between you two in regard to the letter?"

"My friend asked me if I would do something for her as a favour. I said I'd do everything in my power, which, alas, wasn't much. She kissed me and said it wasn't much in itself but it might perhaps seem so to me: I was to see to a letter to Deruga without anyone being the wiser, then or later. I promised to do what she wished and asked if she could tell me what was in the letter and why no one was to learn of it. She said she felt the need to write to him to tell him that she didn't have much time left and to bid him farewell and that her wish to keep it secret was only due to her fear that people wouldn't understand it and would find it laughable."

"At the time did it not occur to you to ask yourself if this was really the case?"

"Back then I thought that maybe she'd written to him to say that she'd like to see him one more time before she died, and had been afraid to tell me. Then, when the charge against Dr. Deruga got more serious I could see how dangerous the letter could be for him, either because she'd asked him to come or that she'd informed him of the contents of the will, and I chose rather to lie than to make things worse for him because I knew what pain it would have brought my friend."

"Might there be a connection between that and you turning down your friend's legacy and later on giving away objects of value that your friend had left you?"

Fraulein Schwertfeger went a deep red. "It did seem to me to look as if my friend wanted to reward me for my silence. Especially later on when Dr. Deruga came under suspicion--rightly I thought--I saw myself as someone who had been bribed, an accomplice to a terrible act if I'd kept the least of the precious objects that had belonged to my friend."

"And the thought," said the Presiding Judge, of a possible connection with what is now evident never came into your mind? Didn't your friend, though, on occasions mention to you that she'd be grateful to anyone who was prepared to kill her and thereby put an end to her suffering?"

"I thought it was just something she said on the spur of the moment. It's only now I'm able to see how much my friend, on the whole, kept control of herself when I was with her. And I was so wrong about him."

"But what you never considered," said Dr. Zeunemann by way of a mild rebuke, "was the fact that it would be breaking the law if Geruga had murdered his divorced wife and remained unpunished."

"My thought," said Fraulein Schwertfeger defiantly, "was to do what my conscience bid me do, and leave the rest to God."

"As a human being," said Dr. Zeunemann after a pause, "I cannot criticise your behaviour, even though it cannot serve as a model for other cases."

After Fraulein Schwertfeger had stood down Deruga was called. To enable the jury to hear better, Deruga was asked to leave the dock and to go into the witness stand.

He looked pale, apathetic, annoyed, and uncommunicative, almost as if he were deliberately seeking to offend in order to gain satisfaction.

"You have admitted," the Presiding Judge began solemnly, "killing your divorced wife, an act which until now you have denied. Was this your set aim and purpose in travelling here from Prague?"

"I don't know why you're still bothering me with questions," said the ill-humoured Deruga. "You know that my wife yearned to be freed from her unbearable suffering and that she turned to me because she trusted me. I felt human enough to yield to her request. Doctors as a whole don't have the courage to carry out such a sensible act. I immediately came here and did exactly that. That should be enough for you."

"It's certainly clear from the letter," said the Presiding Judge with calm dignity, "that there was no contact between you and your wife following your divorce; and that during that time you knew nothing of any inheritance."

"During that time!" Deruga repeated noisily. "Are you implying that in coming here to offer my services, I would only oblige provided she gave me lots of money? And that I'd sell myself for the price of her fortune? I don't know by what standards you assess people. A disgusting world this, where only those with low motives thrive."

"I have to ask you," said the Presiding Judge, "to moderate your language. I've only tolerated some of the words you've used because I assume you possess a morbid excitability. Having given you this warning I can see myself being compelled to resort to severe measures should such behaviour be repeated."

In the meantime Councillor Fein had got to his feet. He asked if he might have a few words with his client.

"Come, come, my dear Doctor," he said, keeping his voice down and clutching Deruga's jacket, "what are you up to? Everything now depends on your making a good impression. Afterwards it'll be too late. Pull yourself together. Do it for my sake. Imagine it's me you're telling it all to. When he's trying to figure out all likely possibilities, the poor devil's only doing what he's supposed, after all. You might be a swine for all he knows."

"I don't know why it gets my blood up," Deruga replied, "whenever I see this Areopagus of herded sheep sitting in judgement of hungry wolves. Would I were a thieving murderer or an arsonist! Here I'm ashamed to be respectable."

"You most definitely are not," the Councillor assured him, "that is, not in the sense you used. And have you no feeling at all for that brave old spinster in the witness stand? Tell your story to her! Imagine how glad she'll be not having to think of you as a villain."

"Stupid, stubborn goose," Deruga mumbled, but he was looking friendlier, and he declared himself ready to answer questions directed at him.

"When you received the letter from your divorced wife," began Dr. Zeunemann once more, "did you immediately resolve to grant her wish?"

"When I saw her handwriting," recounted Deruga in a quiet, steady voice, "which I hadn't seen for years and which was so completely unaltered that I recognised it at once, I was suddenly seized by a feeling of anxiety coupled with rage and hate, which always came over me whenever I was reminded of her by chance; although in recent years it happened very rarely. What can she want from me? I wondered. Was she wanting to tell me that she was sorry for destroying my life? Did she imagine that there was still some kind of bond between us? Did she think I could ever forget what I'd gone through because of her? Things like that. Yet once I'd read the letter all of that disappeared and I felt nothing but compassion and love. I felt what I had never before felt: a pure, strong, perfect love for that suffering creature I had treated so badly, a love that consisted simply in the desire to comfort her and help her. I remembered her fear of pain, and how often she'd asked me if I loved her, should she fall victim to a very painful illness, enough to kill her. I remembered how grateful she was when I promised her I would, and how her confident, superior manner then disappeared and she'd snuggle up to me like a child. All the jealousy, the hurt, the vindictiveness that had embittered me towards her in the past was erased and replaced solely by my feeling, should I be unable to cure her, that I wanted to free her from her suffering."

The moment Deruga paused the State Prosecutor seized the opportunity to gesticulate with arms held high and give instructions in a hissed whisper to one of the court ushers to bring a chair for the accused whose strength seemed to be waning.

After expressing his thanks Deruga continued: "My initial impulse was to depart straightaway but then I thought of the extremely serious consequences my action could bring me and I decided that wherever possible I would try to avert them. As to the ways and means of killing Mingo I decided on curare of which I happened to have a sufficient dose. In certain respects chloroform would have been preferable but I ruled it out because the smell of it would immediately have given it away. And besides, with there being no chloroform in the house, suicide would be the first assumption; in any case, it was far safer, it seemed to me, to select a poison that left no trace behind, with the result that there would be no suspicion at all that a violent death had occurred.

"As my wife had made no mention of how I was to get to her I thought at first of asking her, however, I dismissed the idea because I reasoned that the letter might well come into the possession of a maid or nurse who couldn't be counted on. After thinking up all sorts of plans, only to discard them, I decided I'd disguise myself as a man of the road or a pedlar. I'd call at the place where she lived and gauge the situation. I was confident that I'd discover some way of getting inside and was counting on having the sort of bright idea people get when they really need one. Suddenly I recalled something that happened years before when I'd attended a masked ball dressed as a mousetrap seller, and not only was I unrecognised, but various people took me for a real life Slovak mousetrap seller who had

been smuggled in for a joke. I wrapped the coat I'd picked up in some paper and took it with me as my only piece of luggage, meaning to change either in the compartment or at the station.

"On the way I decided that changing clothes on the train would be noticed and might arouse suspicion, and even perhaps hold me up, and that I'd have no opportunity to change clothes at the station. As it was still very early in the day, about half-past five I assumed that in the station grounds, I'd go completely unobserved. In fact it was deserted and quiet everywhere and when I saw the semi-circular stone bench Dr. Bernburger described to us, it struck me as being just the right place to change and find a hiding place for my town coat which I would need on my return journey. After I'd put on my hawker's outfit, I wrapped up my own and stashed it under the bench. As an added touch, I piled on top of it some of the dead leaves that were lying around.

"The first thing I did then was to go into a small cafe on the outskirts of the city and have breakfast, not so much as to refresh me but to test the impression I gave, and I found that I was thought to be the genuine article, exactly as I'd imagined I would. I hung around until midday and then betook myself to Garden Road. Apart from my longing to see Marmotte again I wasn't at all excited. I gave scarcely a thought to the purpose that had brought me there: all that was in my mind was how much we would have to tell each other.

"When Ursula opened the door to me I found it hard not to reveal who I was because I was so happy to see her once more. I would much preferred to have greeted her and asked her if she still recognised me. I heard Marmotte ring her bell. Ursula rushed off to her leaving the door to close on its own. I swiftly stuck in the gap one of the wooden spoons I'd brought along as part of my wares. It was an inspiration of the moment. If I'd had time to think, I perhaps wouldn't have acted because it was the devil of a risk to take. All the same, I felt sure I could somehow win Ursula over if she toppled to what was going on. I left the plate of soup she'd brought me on the top step and, trusting to luck, nipped through the nearest door; it led into the guest room and obviously wasn't being used. I heard Ursula return, open the front door and mutter to herself when she found the untouched soup. When I'd heard her go back into the kitchen I went carefully forward and glimpsed Mingo's bed through the open door of the adjoining room. I said softly: 'Marmotte, Dodo is here.'

"Sitting alone in the guest room, waiting, I experienced heavenly bliss. For several hours I felt delights, the like of which are not found on earth, delights which perhaps the martyred saints felt when pain ceased and down upon them through the clouds came angels bearing the crown of eternal life. My heart was completely filled with divine love that wants nothing other than the happiness of the beloved. Now I had seen her once again, the woman whose name alone would previously have unleashed in me an outburst of passion, love, hate, vindictiveness. What do we still carry with us from the child we once were thirty, forty, fifty years ago? In the intervening years our whole body has renewed itself, but we perhaps have no more thoughts and feelings than we had then, and that is the surest thing we know. Ah, there was nothing left of the Marmotte I had once called

mine, and yet in that single moment I had seen in that face, now ravaged by the years and illness, the same face she would have had as a child, magically brought to life by innocence, love and goodness. It can only have been an apparition, and I don't know with what eyes I saw it. Physically here was an ageing grievously ill woman, similar to a plant caught unawares by the night frost, but now standing in the sunshine. There was nothing left of my poor Marmotte that could have aroused the passions of any man, but she was so dear to me, so precious and holy that I would not have hesitated to lay down my life for her, if by doing so I could have brought her some happiness. Poor helpless creature, I thought, you're not going to suffer any longer! No matter what it cost me, or how severe the consequences I will bring you peace. And if all your sufferings could be transferred to me I would accept them and be glad that you could have rest instead.

"I had earlier thought that I would, first of all, need to ascertain the nature and degree of her illness, but the way she looked was more than enough indication to me that it was well advanced. As soon as I heard Ursula close the door behind her and go down the steps I got to my feet just as Marmotte called me. I sat on the edge of her bed and told her how glad I was that Ursula was still with her and how I'd hardly been able to stop myself laughing when she failed to recognise me. 'I would have recognised you straightaway.' she said, and then we chatted about the past and exchanged the little things we each remembered. I got her to talk about her illness, her operations, and her treatment. Her voice hadn't changed, or perhaps it was a little sweeter than before. It sounded like a faraway alpenhorn probably sounds in the mountains at twilight when tints of rose, green and grey appear together on the horizon. While we were talking she held my hand tightly between hers; suddenly she kissed it and said: 'You dear, good, lovely hand, I've often thought of you and how you would deliver me!'

"It could have been half an hour later when I was able to see in her face that a pain attack was on its way. I knew then that the moment had come. I had brought something with me to drive the pain away, I told her, and I wanted to prepare it in the kitchen: that way we could continue talking just the same. 'Will it hurt?' she asked, looking at me anxiously, the corner of her mouth trembling. Poor, little, timorous Marmotte! She was frightened of it. I laughed and said: 'What are you thinking? It doesn't happen that fast. First I want to observe you for a short while because maybe with clever treatment you can be made healthy again.' With those words I went into the kitchen, found a glass and mixed it with lemonade and sugar so that it didn't taste bitter. When I got back to her she was in great pain and after I'd sat her up to enable her to drink she told me that the previous night she had dreamed of our own little Mingo. 'How I long to see her again,' she said, 'and later when you come we'll be standing there hand in hand, waiting for you.' I nodded, and supporting her with my arm, put the glass to her lips. She looked gratefully at me and drank eagerly.

"I waited until she was dead, then laid her down, kissed her on her forehead and said: 'Adieu, dear, sweet Marmotte.' Then I arranged both rooms exactly as they had been, went into the kitchen, cleaned the glass, removed

every single trace of my having been there, and left. I met no one in the building but on the paved path that led to the gate I could see the janitor standing there. Until then I'd been completely calm, or so I thought, but when I caught sight of the janitor, it came to me that I had to do something that made me look casual. Automatically I felt in my pocket and pulled out a cigarette; going straight up to him I said: 'Got a light, Your Honour?' When I did take a puff it made me feel sick and I threw the cigarette into the bushes, without thinking for a moment that it might catch someone's eye.

"The next train to Prague was not until next morning and it was only five-thirty in the afternoon. Once more I strolled about in the outer areas of the city and went into a cafe. As night fell I made my way into the station grounds. It still seemed too early to be changing clothes. However, since I didn't care to do any more walking I sat myself down to wait on the semi-circular stone bench beneath which I'd hidden my coat. The heavenly feelings that had kept my spirits high when I was with Marmotte had vanished, I'd been brought back to earth and I was frozen. I'd gone all day with nothing more than a black coffee and I was so weak and weary I hardly knew how I came to be sitting there. It all seemed idiotic and purposeless.

"Towards midnight a wind got up that was strong enough to make my bones rattle yet it was this that broke through the despondency that had taken hold of me. There was nothing but a deathly silence all around me. I got up, pulled the package out from under the dead leaves I'd covered it with, and changed my clothes. I didn't want to take the workman's coat with me and my first thought was to put it back under the bench. Then it suddenly occurred to me that an even better way of getting rid of it would be to throw it into the canal.

"I was already standing on the bridge when I remembered that my money was still in the coat. On my way to the station I pictured to myself how disastrous it would have been for me if I'd found myself without any money, and in turn I was reminded that I'd also had Mingo's letter on me in case I forgot her address. I was sorry to have lost the letter, but I was too tired and too resigned to fish the package out of the water, which seemed to me anyway to be a bit of a fool's errand. On top of that I had a dread of that deserted place even though I'm not given to having such moods. If I went back I could just see myself sitting on the white bench with nothing but black water in front of me. In the railway carriage I instantly fell asleep and slept deeply until I arrived home. I got the impression that no one had seen me and no one had noticed I'd been away."

"Why did you not immediately offer these facts to the court as being a true representation of what had happened?" asked the Presiding Judge, who throughout the lengthy account had been playing with his pencil and to an observer appeared to be absorbed looking at it. "It would have ensured you a more confident position from the outset."

"Yes, if I'd been believed!" said Deruga. "By losing my wife's letter I'd lost the only proof I could produce, and I didn't think it possible I'd ever recover it. What's more, I convinced myself that even if anyone came upon the workcoat, the water would have destroyed the letter."

"Strange story, that!" said Dr. Zeunemann to his colleagues after the session had ended. "I confess, the fellow almost moved me. Mutual benevolence of that order is seldom to be found among married couples."

"Even divorced ones," said the Prosecutor artfully. Everyone laughed.

"Incidentally," said Dr. Zeunemann, "I do find our Italian a little nervy and sensitive. I wasn't wrong to liken him to a chameleon."

True, the others agreed, but when all said and done, it wasn't a crime to be a chameleon; in fact, some found them charming.

"A plaything for the ladies," said the Prosecutor cheerfully, "and for the sake of the ladies he must be acquitted. I hope our jury members won't forget that the ladies are the ones, in public life as well as in private, who are the decisive factor."

"I particularly hope you're not forgetting," said Dr. Zeunemann, "that there are women who are not prominent in public or private life, who are, nevertheless, braver than those in our own strong sex."

Everyone recalled the Presiding Judge's soft spot for Fraulein Gundel Schwertfeger, and teased him about it.

Yes, said Dr. Zeunemann, justifying himself, he looked into the heart of a witness and wasn't one to let himself be blinded by the flashy flamboyance of the eternally young Prosecutor.

To which the latter replied: "She lied like a saint, and it's fine by me if the court awards her with a halo instead of imposing a punishment on her, because she's already got her martyrdom behind her. From now on, though, I shall redouble my efforts and insist on the letter of the law."

Part nineteen

Dusk was already gathering by the time Mingo arrived back at the hotel; she found her mother sitting near the fire leafing through a book.

"Where were you?" the Baroness asked disapprovingly, laying the book in her lap, "I've been concerned about you."

"But, Mama," said Mingo in astonishment, "I didn't think you would be. Whenever we've separated you've have no idea when I'd be home, and you never get worried about me."

"That's different, Mingo," answered the Baroness sharply. "I would still be on this earth if I didn't keep thinking about you when you're not here. In matters such as this you must abide by my wishes and follow what custom dictates. A young woman of good family can't be walking through the streets in the dark all by herself."

"That never occurred to me," said Mingo, meekly excusing herself, "because I'm so used to doing it. I was so happy, Mama."

"Happy? Why?" asked the Baroness. "Because we're going to Paris, or because Peter Hase is accompanying us? Or is it because you're being allowed to study?"

"Oh, no, Mama," answered Mingo, "but because the dreadful trial will soon be coming to an end, and because he'll be acquitted. He will, won't he?"

"I certainly believe so," said the Baroness.

Mingo, who in the meantime had crouched on a cushion at her mother's feet, exclaimed: "But it's as clear as day that he's innocent!"

"Going by the letter of the law he's far from innocent," said the Baroness.

Fear and doubts showed in Mingo's face which gradually contorted and looked as pitiful and helpless as that of a little child; breaking into tears she hugged her mother's knees. "Oh Mama, I couldn't bear it," she sobbed, "I couldn't bear it."

The Baroness gently took hold of her and pushed her upright. "What's wrong with you? What's bothering you, child?" she asked, trying to fend off a stabbing pain that wrung her heart.

"Don't push me away, Mama," Mingo sobbed, putting her arms tightly round her mother, "I can't help being this way. Please help me. You're the only one I have. I can't live without him."

The Baroness bent down, drew the small figure onto her lap and pressed the tear-soaked face to hers. "My little Mingo," she said tenderly, "do you love him so much?"

Still sobbing, Mingo held tight to her mother. "I would gladly die if doing so could make him happy," she said softly.

The Baroness stroked her face and held her close. "My little love," she said soothingly, "it's natural that in the position he is in, he's made a strong impression on your loving, phantasing mind. It's true I know that his is a powerful magic that he exerts on people. But believe me he is not the man who could make you happy; quite apart from that, his age and standing immediately rule out any thought of his marrying you."

"His standing," exclaimed an outraged Mingo, rearing. "Oh, Mama, were he a roadsweeper he'd stand high, high above me and all the other men I know. Oh, Mama, I can't bear for you to be so narrow-minded in what you do and say. What do I care about his age? What do I want from him? If, for a moment, my youth can gladden his heart, the way a flower does, I would be happy to be allowed to sacrifice it to him."

She suddenly broke off: she could see that her mother's lovely grey, black-edged eyes were moist, and that there were traces of tears on her pale cheeks. She took the lace-trimmed handkerchief that the baroness held in her hand and gently dried her face and prompted by a thought asked: "Are those my tears?"

"Whose else would they be?" asked the baroness with a smile.

"But I can see your own tears in your eyes as well," continued Mingo. "Oh, Mama, what a wicked child I am to cause you such sorrow. But there's nothing at all I can do about it. I'm quite certain it's stronger than me. I would give everything, everything I have if he could only love me a tiny bit, and if he could at least bear to have me round him. I don't know what I'll do without him."

"My sweet little Mingo" began the Baroness, unaware that her daughter wanted to share the words with another's cherished Mingo, "first of all you need to cool your face; your father could appear at any moment and I'm sure you wouldn't like it if he saw you like this. I'm afraid he'd have little sympathy for the way you're feeling, so just let's now wait quietly for the verdict! Should it be that Dr. Deruga's not acquitted we needn't give up hope. What happens then won't depend on us. We can't force him to love you, but it's my belief that on account of his dead daughter he already has a warm feeling for you."

"Do you think so?" asked Mingo, dabbing her hot face with a damp cloth. The unfamiliar show of maternal tenderness had something of a cradling effect on her and she instinctively embraced her mother tightly as if she were trying to prevent the beneficent mood vanishing like a dream.

"All of a sudden you're a little child again," said the Baroness, "and are thinking like little children do: Mama will give me the sun and moon if I wish her to." looked at the baroness through eyes grown wide believing in miracles; she nodded. "That's because you're so good to me," she said.

It was getting towards morning before the baroness fell asleep and she woke with a tired, joyless heart. She was gradually enlivened by Mingo's loving greeting, her small attentions, and her furtive glances.

"Now, Mingo," the Baroness announced, "I'll take you to the court with me but only if you'll behave properly. I do hate scenes, particularly in public."

Mingo gave her word, which, as it happened, wasn't put to too great a test, for the speeches were brief, and the jury, after barely half an hours deliberation, rejected all question of guilt.

In the general commotion that ensued Deruga appeared to be the only person not to care; it was not until after the baroness had congratulated him and he saw Mingo's eyes directed at him, full of love and concern, that his expression softened.

"Little Mingo," he said, nodding to her, "are you satisfied now? You see, people aren't so bad!"

She was instantly overwhelmed by the happiness those words brought her; but sitting next to her mother in the car dreamily reliving all her experiences, it seemed to her that the man she admired had in truth been more than brisk with her. Who would he be celebrating his marvellous triumph with? Was he glad after all? There had been so much revulsion and contempt in his face he could have been secretly enjoying himself. Would he be any the happier knowing that she was utterly devoted to him.

"Mingo," said the Baroness that afternoon when they were alone together, "I'm going to see if I can find Deruga, to

see what he intends to do in the near future and to ask him to regard me as a relative. I shan't be taking you with me because you're scarcely able to control your feelings and it is unseemly, as you'll discover, for a girl to throw herself at a man."

Mingo saw things differently. In the case of this particular man to be barricading herself behind the rules of propriety seemed unworthy; far better to tell him openly and directly: I am yours, take me with you. However, knowing that her mother would not be won over by the idea and because she was as scared of a meeting with Deruga as she yearned for one, she expressed her gratitude and agreed.

"Though am I allowed to send him my greetings?" she asked.

The Baroness smiled and kissed her. "You can go for a walk with your father. It'll help pass the time."

Part twenty

When the Baroness entered she found Deruga sitting at a table writing. She waited a moment before observing: "You don't look like a victor. I don't have the heart to congratulate you."

"You're mistaken," Deruga answered. "I've just this minute made my mind up, and I am to be congratulated for doing so. I shall quit the scene--it displeases me."

"I thought as much," said the Baroness. "Would you come to come with us to Paris?"

"No, I want to go away, a lot further away," he said.

"Well that's good," said the Baroness. "Once you're away from here you'll forget all your ghastly experiences and you'll remember that in all the gloom and turmoil you were able to capture a precious treasure, a pure, warm, true heart, and then slowly bit by bit you'll you'll come back to us."

"I'm not so rash as to imagine, Baroness, that I had won your heart," said Deruga teasingly, "so your description most likely doesn't quite fit."

"No, not quite," agreed the Baroness, with a wistful, flirtatious sway of her head. "I was thinking more of someone related to me, very closely related."

"Little Mingo," said Deruga dreamily, then turning swiftly to his guest: "Ah, Baroness, do you really think I could bear to have a creature at my side who would forever remind me of my own little Mingo whom I lost? If you think it would be possible then you don't know what a parent's love is."

"Oh yes, I have come to know what it is," said the baroness, slowly directing her veiled gaze towards him.

"I believe you but perhaps you're not able to put yourself in my position," said Deruga.

"It's only natural," said the Baroness, "that my first thoughts are for myself and my child; and it goes without saying that a mother would not readily give her daughter to a man so much older than her. Despite that I decided I would speak to you of her affection because it so happened that its strength and innocent trust moved me and awakened me the belief that it could, by God's will as they say, come about. I freely admit that I dread seeing the child suffer."

"It's the fulfilment of her wish that would cause her real suffering," said Deruga. "She doesn't know me. And even you, Baroness, clearly don't know me at all well."

"Nature doesn't want us women to know men fully," said the Baroness blushing slightly. "Had it not blinded us, then, for better or for worse, we would have had to blindfold ourselves. But with regard to you, you in particular, I thought it would depend entirely on your will, whether to be, if not a great man, then a very good one"

"If that were true," said Deruga, "I would be. But my will doesn't depend on me but on my blood, my nerves, the impressions I receive, from a thousand different stops and starts that I'm not master of. I've had moments when I've been disgusted with myself and, having now surveyed from above all human baseness I want to prevent them returning."

"And couldn't the best prevention be," asked the Baroness with urgent concern, "to share your life with someone who is young, pure and trusting?"

"If I were strong, yes," said Deruga. "but as I'm weak I have no alternative but to go away."

There was something in the way he looked and in the sound of his words that suddenly allowed the baroness to understand him properly. Her hand that rested on the arm of her chair trembled and she turned pale. She was seized by a terrible fear that he might there and then, right in front of her kill himself, and at the same time it ran through her mind that for her this would be the best solution.

"It's awful, your telling me that," she moaned, closing her eyes and leaning her head back.

"Not so very much," said Deruga. "I I wouldn't have told you had I not known how sensible you are. I'm willing to confess that when your eyes met mine for the first time the look you gave me was a mixture of dislike and a suddenly aroused attraction, with the result that there awoke in me a strong desire to live, such as I hadn't felt for years. Because, believe it or not, I had only gone on living because it was what I'd always done; it had no particular appeal for me. There was nothing fine or beautiful about the urge you ignited in me, it was a jumble of pleasure-seeking, conceit, and self-love which with us men all that chiefly forms the basis of our passion. As I saw it all at once the wealth that had fallen in my lap doubled in value. Buoyed up by this I wanted at any price to live, whatever the sacrifice, and enjoy myself regardless of anything. Who knows what would have happened if the good Dr. Bernburger hadn't found my poor Marmotte's letter!"

"The new love paled before the old love," said the Baroness softly.

"You could put it that way," said Deruga. "Touched by the finger of memory there rose up before me those heavenly years I'd once been given. I saw that I had since been beguiled and that what I thought to be splendid and pleasurable was shallow, fragile, and vile in comparison with the bliss I experienced when I gave my poor, sick Marmotte her death. With the inheritance, yes, I would be richer and more respected, I would have the pick of lovelier women of a higher class, yet with every step I took, I would sink deeper into the mire of the mundane and remove myself further from that divine happiness until it was only a memory and I had finally lost my aptitude for it."

"One can't dwell on the heights forever," observed the Baroness timidly.

"Me least of all," said Deruga, "but there was that one time when I was blessed and breathed heavenly air. After all those everlasting moments I have no longer have any liking time for your time."

"Perhaps," said the Baroness, hesitating, "Mingo could change your mind if she came to see you."

"That would be disastrous for us both," said Deruga. "Leave the child with a beautiful, sacred memory that will one day, perhaps, show the dark areas in her life in a new light. I'm happy at the thought that she'll keep an undefiled image of me in her loving heart. Promise me, Baroness, you won't destroy it."

She pressed her handkerchief to her eyes and sat facing him, not saying a word, for a long time. Then, without warning, a thought shot through her mind; she sat up straight and asked: "And what about the cursed inheritance? What will happen to it when you ... leave?"

Deruga laughed. "Truly, Baroness," he said, "if it weren't for Gundel Schwertfeger I'd be delighted to have it go to you. But you see it's absolutely right that Gundel Schwertfeger receives the money because Marmotte had originally meant her to have it, and she will use it in the way Marmotte wished. I must say, she deserves it, that true, brave heart, even though I was nasty to her that time because she judged me too severely. Basically I was angry only because she was incorruptible."

"Ah!" said the Baroness, pouting. "You and Fraulein Schwarzfeger are the sort of people who only have a heart for the sufferings of the poor. Believe me, relatively speaking I am poorer than the wife of the poorest day labourer."

"Yes, but, as you say, only relatively," laughed Deruga.

"Well, let's leave it," said the Baroness. "I ask only one thing of you: don't let that pin, the Moor's head one you wear in your cravat, pass into a stranger's hand."

"You shall have it as a memento," said Deruga, "when I start my journey. But don't ever think, Baroness, that you are to blame for my departure. Many's the time, before the trial, I resolved on leaving my tedious post where I'm just as bored as you are in your marriage. Perhaps you remember the time back at the beginning of the trial when I described how I'd gone out into the countryside and wandered about looking for a place where I could out in the open like an

animal, alone. I didn't make that up, even though I may not have given exactly the right day."

The Baroness had risen to her feet and now hesitantly offered him her hand. "Dear Doctor," she said, "everything you've just said to me was the expression of a mood this is explained by previous impressions that will, however, pass. Your numerous friends will be trying to find ways to make it happen and I'm convinced that by morning you'll already be feeling closer to the earth, more human. I wouldn't be able to say 'adieu' if I weren't counting on it."

"I kiss your hand, Baroness. Greet Mingo for me."

On the stairs the Baroness pulled out a lace veil from the small hand and tied it over her face which was flooded with tears. It was only when she had spent some time walking up and down the remote, deserted street and her tears had had time to dry that she was able to regain some of her composure. All the same, she couldn't bring herself to go back home and decided to make a detour by way of the inner city and the elegant shops it held and make a few necessary purchases for her forthcoming departure.

For her there was something liberating in the thought of Paris. She reckoned, with a fresh scene, she would meet new people, gather new impressions, and they would restore her. She was in more need of that than Mingo. Yes, things had worked out well for Mingo: she saw that more clearly with every moment that passed. If Mingo had married Deruga, presumably she'd have had a short period of passionate delight but at the price of a life full of disappointments and manifold bitterness; for no matter what treasures his heart might hold, for her he would have soon become an ageing moody, wearied emptiness. However, the pain Mingo was experiencing now would soon, as Deruga had predicted, be transformed into a holy and precious memory that she would welcome in her dreams. Perhaps, as a result of all the turbulence she had experienced she would be in exactly the right state of mind to be receptive to Peter Hase's attentions since he was to accompany them, or if not him then some other man who might succeed in interesting her. Mingo's experiences had to be seen as the first loosening of the ground of her soul that until then had been impervious to love. It was up to Mingo herself now to secure a rich harvest for the future.

By contrast, however, the Baroness had only, so she thought, an arid autumn and a bleak winter to look forward to. The very thought made her shiver and she pulled the fur coat, which she still wore on cool spring days, closely round her. Was there any place on earth that had the wonderful seasons and the heavenly climate that Deruga romanced about. Ah, with what exotic thoughts had he unsettled her! No, she's always distanced herself from the high-flown and the exuberant, and would continue to do likewise with anything that offended her good taste. Life abounded in happy, charming moments; she wanted to master the art of capturing these moments, these butterflies, and to delight in their lustre without touching them. Could she find any better opportunity for achieving this than in Paris in the company of her daughter and Peter Hase? And wasn't her husband such an estimable companion? Handsome, elegant, courteous, wasn't even his boring lack of colour more a sign of being at ease?

There was now a spring in her step, and she looked brighter. When she arrived back at the hotel, her very being radiated such cheery anticipation that a little of it transferred to Mingo.

A few days later, in Paris, she received a little package with Deruga's Moor's Head pin inside. Her eyes became moist, but she quickly hid the jewel in a casket where she normally locked her valuables, with the intention of taking it out again only when her heart once more was completely safe and still.